Proposed Undergraduate Degree Framework Overview

Draft policy follows on page 7

History and Current Challenges

Undergraduate degrees at York are governed by two senate policies, the BA Matrix and the BSc Degree Framework, approved in 2011 and 2014 respectively. These frameworks were developed as the result of the efforts of several task forces and working groups dating to the 1990s.

York's current senate-approved policies apply only to the BA and the BSc. While other degree types may fall under faculty rules for degree requirements, the degree requirements for new undergraduate degree types, which are increasingly frequently approved by senate, are not governed by any senate policy. For example, two recently approved BASc (Bachelor of Applied Science) programs at Markham have very few breadth requirements, since they don't fall under the BA matrix or the BSc Degree Framework. Relatedly, faculties may interpret the existing policies liberally, which is the case for Glendon's BA programs. Other issues identified are students overtaking 1000-level credits, and complex degree requirements negatively affecting student experience and retention.

The development and approval of these two frameworks coincided with sector wide quality assurance initiatives, including the approval of province-wide Degree-Level Expectations and the Quality Assurance Framework by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents in 2008 and 2010 respectively. These sector-wide frameworks are now deeply embedded in York's own quality assurance processes, including cyclical program review and new program approvals. York is held accountable to these frameworks through its ongoing engagement with the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance, which approves new programs, reviews York's cyclical program review activity, and conducts an audit of York's quality assurance processes every eight years.

The current Working Group was established as part of the YU Forward Action Plan to respond to a number of issues that have been identified in relation to current policies governing undergraduate degrees. The two co-chairs invited members from across the university, with the goal of cross-faculty representation and Senate oversight, via the Senate Committee on Academic Standards, Curriculum and Pedagogy (ASCP). The Working Group considered existing challenges along the following themes:

Pan-university framework: The current senate policies address only the BA and the BSc, meaning that the proliferation of new degree types since the two existing undergraduate degree frameworks were originally conceived are not covered by a Senate-level policy. A revised framework should cover all new and existing degree types (with some exceptions for accredited programs, etc.)

Student experience: Student experience is negatively affected by complex requirements. A revised framework should be attractive to students and the purpose of each requirement should be clearly articulated. The framework should be designed in such a way that it is not perceived as (or experienced as) as punitive or onerous.

Cap on 1000-level credits: York is one of few institutions without an institutional cap on 1000-level credits, and indeed, many students graduate with more than the expected 30 – 36 credits at the 1000 level. While some faculties impose their own caps, these are not enforced. This leads to the dilution of the degree and a lack of curricular coherence, especially when students fill their schedules with 1000-level courses in upper years. A revised framework should introduce a maximum for 1000-level credits, in line with sector norms.

An expansive view of breadth: Undergraduate degree requirements should encourage students to explore the full scope of the university's offerings early in their degree programs, according to their personal, professional, and academic interests. Degree requirements should also provide for breadth across the study levels and encourage students to take upper-level courses outside of their major. In other words, a revised degree framework should include both a lateral (across disciplines) as well as a vertical (across study levels) view of breadth.

Policy Development Process and Timeline

The Working Group included members familiar with the current undergraduate degree and general education model, including faculty members from the Department of Humanities, the Department of Social Sciences, and the Department of Science, Technology, and Society, as well as members whose roles as Associate Deans/Deans provide them with extensive knowledge of enrolment patterns and advising pressures at the faculty level. The list of members is available on the project web page, here: York U Forward Action Plan.

The Working Group also included two ASCP members who provided updates to and consulted with the senate committee biweekly. This report was a standing item on the ASCP agenda for the 2024-25 academic year. The draft policy was presented in full to ASCP on April 9, 2025, and ASCP endorsed a revised draft of the policy for further consultation on April 23, 2025.

The consultation process is being led by ASCP. Consultations with each Faculty Council are being led by ASCP Chair Josh Thienpont, with the participation of the working group co-chairs, Kate McPherson and Chloë Brushwood Rose. ASCP will also host student consultations during the 2025-26 academic year. Additionally, community members are invited to provide feedback

on the policy to ASCP directly via MachForm. ASCP members will review this feedback in late fall, 2025.

The following meetings and consultations have already taken place and have helped shape the policy's development.

Date	Consultation	Notes
October 2024 - April 2025	Bi-weekly working group meetings	Special presentations: LA&PS Planning Process; York Libraries Digital and Information Literacy; Glendon Core
October 2024 – April 2025	Standing Report to ASCP at its regular meetings	Meeting dates: October 30, November 13, November 27, December 11, January 22, February 5, February 26, March 5, March 19, April 9, April 23.
December 3, 2024	Faculty of Science, Associate Dean Students	
December 3, 2024	Glendon, Associate Principal Academic	Included feedback from Glendon academic services staff
December 11, 2024	ASCP	Detailed presentation and update for feedback
January 15, 2025	Records and Scheduling Leadership Team, Office of the University Registrar (OUR)	
February 11, 2025	Natural Sciences (NATS), Director	
April 3, 2025	Vice-Provost Academic and Director, Academic Programs and Policy	
April 8, 2025	Program, Proposal, Policy Review and Implementation Committee Experts (PPPRICE)	Membership made up of Office of the Vice Provost, Academic, OUR, and Secretariat representatives)
April 8, 2025	Deans' Forum	
April 9, 2025	ASCP	Draft Framework presented for feedback
April 23, 2025	ASCP	Draft Framework ENDORSED - moved forward for wider consultation
May 6, 2025	Deans' Forum	Full draft Framework presented
May 8, 2025	APPRC	Full draft Framework presented
June 2, 2025	Office of the University Registrar	Included Associate Registrar, Student Records and Scheduling, Director, Student Systems and Assistant Director, Calendar and Curriculum
July 8, 2025	Director, Strategic Enrolment, Recruitment & Faculty Affairs, LA&PS	
August 20, 2025	Office of the University Registrar	
August 21, 2025	University Lead, Student Advising & Retention Initiatives	

Policy Overview

Pan University Framework:

The policy applies to all new and existing undergraduate degrees, with exceptions for some highly-specialized programs (e.g., BASc, Digital Technologies) and accredited programs (e.g., BScN, BEd).This allows for increased collaboration across faculties and provides a starting for future pan-university initiatives, and ensures that going forward, all students will have the same opportunities to explore both within and beyond their discipline.

Note: programs have been excepted when their courses and/or course sequencing is prescribed by an accrediting body, when they are designed as second-entry programs, or when intensive WIL or other specialized programing restricts program design and course sequencing. A full list of exceptions is included in the policy.

Maximum number of 1000-level credits:

Students may only apply 42 1000-level credits to their degree. This is in line with sector norms. In fact, York is one of very few universities without a limit on the number of first-year credits a student can take. A maximum of 42 1000-level credits is typical in many Ontario universities.

Limiting the number of 1000-level credits will encourage students to focus their studies, either by taking additional credits in the major or by adding a certificate, minor, or second major, rather than padding their degree with a large number of unconnected 1000-level courses. This enhances the student experience by providing more opportunity for students to find cohesiveness and connection either within a major or second discipline, which in turn has the benefit of enhanced curricular coherence but also increased opportunity for cohort building and sustained inter-personal connection – characteristics that increase student satisfaction and retention. Certain specialized courses, for example, credit recovery courses, will be excepted.

Breadth Credits:

The revised framework envisions the undergraduate degree requirements as a pyramid: in the first year, students explore broadly. In subsequent years, students narrow their focus, making connections between subjects with greater sophistication, until the final years, when students are immersed in their major. The category names “Explore,” “Connect,” and “Major” refer directly to their purpose within the degree.

The Explore requirement distributes the first-year breadth requirement widely across the university, encouraging students to explore modes of inquiry, meaning-making, and knowledge creation that they might not otherwise encounter, and that reflect the current landscape of

university education. To satisfy the Explore requirement, students take courses across four categories, each of which includes courses from various Faculties and departments. The categories are: Social Worlds, Creativity and Cultures, Scientific Foundations, and Inquiry in Action.

The Connect requirement shifts what are currently known as the 'outside the major' credits to the 2000-level or higher, encouraging more sophisticated levels of engagement with an area outside the major, adding an element of "depth" to this breadth requirement. Many students will use this opportunity to pursue a minor, which adds an additional credential as well as coherence to the degree. While declaring a minor is already an option for students, working group members noted that this option seems to be currently be less attractive given the opportunity to take less challenging 1000-level courses.

Potential Impact

Student Experience

Overall, the proposed policy will improve students' experience. Students stand to benefit from a simplified framework that provides opportunity to explore subjects that are aligned with their personal and professional interests. The revised requirements reduce the likelihood of situations that feel punitive to students, such as having to take new breadth requirements after switching majors. They have been designed to open doors to further exploration through more advanced study. Finally, clearly articulated degree requirements accompanied by fresh, student-facing communications may drive positive outcomes in terms of retention and recruitment.

Lateral Distribution of Breadth

The diversity of study options at York has expanded over the decades. Our curriculum should be structured in a way that values and encourages exploration across this expanding landscape. Including the full range of disciplines and fields of study available at York as part of the breadth requirement highlights a commitment to fostering connection and collaboration across faculties. The Explore categories are designed to be meaningful and engaging to current and prospectives students in the current context, while reflecting the traditions of the liberal arts university.

Vertical Distribution of Breadth

The proposed breadth requirements, taken alongside the cap on 1000-level credits, distribute breadth through students' levels of study as well as across the university. By reducing the number of credits at the 1000-level and requiring 18 credits outside the major at the 2000-level or higher, students are encouraged to spend more time in advanced study, either in their major, in a minor, or in courses that relate to their explore courses. This more focused

academic structure has a complementary benefit in terms of improved social connections within the major program, which may have a positive impact on retention and time-to-completion.

Faculty-level Enrolment

Upon implementation, it is expected that there will be a *gradual* reduction in demand for 1000-level courses and an increase in demand and/or fill rates for courses at the 2000-level and higher. This has a positive effect for students: as demand increases for courses at the 2000-level and higher, it is anticipated that there will be fewer course cancellations, fewer scheduling issues, and greater choice for students completing their major (and/or minor) requirements. At present, capacity for 1000-level teaching is concentrated in a few departments. However, as capacity builds for 1000-level teaching across all faculties, there may be shifts in where students opt to take breadth credits. For the most part, students will have several 1000-level credits left to "spend" on courses outside of the required Explore credits – it is anticipated that they will continue to use these credits according to current enrolment patterns.

Implementation Planning and Timeline

Initial discussions are underway with the Registrar's Office to determine a timeline for implementation. The Office of the Vice-Provost Academic has also been consulted and is prepared to assist units in facilitating the minor modifications that may need to occur to support these changes. Given the lead-times required for faculty governance, systems and calendar changes, the implementation date has yet to be determined but will not be before Fall 2027.

University Policy/Procedures/Guidelines

Undergraduate Degree Framework

Topic:	
Approval Authority:	
Approval Date:	
Effective Date:	
Last Revised:	N/A Replaces BA Matrix and BSc Degree Level Expectations.

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1. Preamble

In 2011 / 2014, York University Senate approved the BA Matrix and the BSc Degree Level Expectations. These documents outlined the requirements for BA and BSc degrees at York in terms of breadth, minimum credits in the major, minimum credits in the major and outside the major, and minimum credit requirements at the 3000 and 4000 level.

In 2024, a working group was established to review and revise these requirements to develop a policy that covers all current and future undergraduate degree types. This policy replaces the BA Matrix (approved by Senate in 2014) and the BSc Pan-University Degree Structure (approved by Senate in 2011).

The policy recognizes the following principles for undergraduate degree requirements at York:

i. Requirements will apply to all existing and future undergraduate degrees (with exceptions noted in Section 3).
ii. Requirements will be clear, and the purpose of each requirement will be transparent to students.

iii. Requirements will maximize flexibility within and across programs and not unnecessarily penalize students who transfer from one program to another.
iv. Requirements will ensure that each undergraduate degree offered at York provides students with breadth across a wide range of subjects at the introductory level, as well as the opportunity to connect their learning across study levels and specialize in one or more disciplines.

2. Purpose

The policy establishes:

i. Credit minimums for degrees, first majors, additional majors, minors.
ii. Credit minimums within breadth and study level categories that comprise the general education components of the degree.
iii. A maximum for 1000-level credits that may be counted toward the fulfilment of the degree requirements.

3. Scope and Application

i. This policy applies to all new and existing undergraduate degrees at York, except:
    a. Bachelor of Education
    b. Bachelor of Engineering
    c. Bachelor of Business Administration
    d. Bachelor of Applied Science, Digital Technologies
    e. Bachelor of Applied Science, Computer Science for Software Development
    f. Bachelor Science, Nursing, (including Direct Entry, Second Entry, and Internationally Educated Nurse)
    g. Bachelor of Social Work (Post-Degree)
ii. This policy is effective as of DATE and will not be applied retroactively. It applies to students who begin a new degree after DATE.
iii. Students who reapply to York after an extended absence must meet the requirements in this policy, regardless of their initial enrolment date.

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4. Definitions

i. **Explore credits** refer to credits at the 1000-level that students are required to take as the breadth component an undergraduate degree at York.
ii. **Connect credits** refer to credits outside the major at the 2000 level or higher.
iii. **Explore categories** refers to the breadth categories from which students may choose their Explore credits. Students must have at least 3 1000-level credits in each of the four Explore categories.
iv. **1000-level credits** are credits that have a course rubric in the 1000 range.
v. **Science credits** are credits with any of the following rubrics: SC/BIOL, SC/BPHS, SC/CHEM, SC/BCHM, SC/ENVB, SC/STSO, SC/GEOG, LE/EATS, HH/KINE, HH/PSYC, SC/MATB, SC/MATH, SC/PHYS, GL/BIOL, GL/MATH, GL/PSYC, LE/EECS, SC/CHEM

5. Roles and responsibilities

i. Students are responsible for ensuring that they meet the requirements for fulfilment of the degree, as defined in this policy and in the calendar.
ii. Each academic unit offering undergraduate degrees is responsible for ensuring that degree program requirements reflect the minimum requirements outlined in this policy.
iii. The Office of the University Registrar is responsible for ensuring that the Academic Calendar accurately communicates the requirements outlined in this policy.

6. Policy

6.1 **Maximum number of 1000-level credits:** Only 42 1000-level credits may be counted toward the fulfilment of the degree. Transfer credits deemed to satisfy 1000-level credits at York will be evaluated according to York's established practices and may be used to satisfy the Explore requirement.

6.2 **Explore Credits: Breadth**

Among the credits counted toward the fulfillment of the degree requirement, students in all undergraduate programs covered by this policy are required to complete at least 18 Explore credits at the 1000 level. Normally, students will complete this requirement within their first 30 credits.

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Students must complete at least 3 credits in each of the four Explore categories below. 1000-level credits in the first major and/or a minor and/or a second major can be counted toward this requirement. Please see Appendix A for the list of course rubrics in each category.

- Creativity and Cultures
- Social Worlds
- Scientific Foundations
- Inquiry in Action

6.3 **Connect Credits: Credits Outside the Major**

Among the credits counted toward the fulfilment of the degree requirements, students in all undergraduate programs covered by this policy are required to complete at least 18 credits outside the major at the 2000 level or higher. Normally, these will be completed after the student has completed the first 30 credits.

In the following cases, major requirements may be counted toward Connect credits. In all other cases, major requirements may not be used to satisfy this requirement.

- Non-major language instruction courses used to satisfy bilingual requirements of a GL degree.
- In BSc degree programs, credits listed in the “Major requirements” category that are not in the major discipline.
- Glendon Core courses at the 2000 level and higher, for a GL degree.

For students graduating with a minor or a second major, the second major or minor credits will be deemed to satisfy this requirement.

6.4 **Major Credits:**

The table below lists the minimum required major and minor (where applicable) credits for each degree type as well as the minimum required number of credits at the 3000-level or above, the minimum number of 4000-level credits required, and the minimum number of major credits required at the 4000-level.

The table shows minimum requirements only. Programs may have requirements that exceed the requirements listed below, as well as additional program requirements.

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Degree type	Total credit count minimum	Major	Second Major	Minor	Upper-level major credits	3000-4000 level credits total	4000 credits total
Ordinary (90 credit)	90	30	N/A	N/A	12 at 3000 or 4000 level	18	N/A
Honours (120 credit)	120	42	N/A	N/A	12 at the 4000-level	42	18
Honours Double Major	120	42	42	N/A	12 at the 4000 level in each major	42	18
Honours Major/Minor	120	42	N/A	30	12 at the 4000 level in the major; 6 at the 4000 level in the minor	42	18
Specialized Honours	120	54	N/A	N/A	12 at the 4000 level	42	18

6.5 **Science credit minimum requirements**

Students graduating with a BSc must complete a minimum number of science credits (see definition above) toward the fulfilment of the degree requirements, as outlined below. Some programs may have higher requirements.

Degree type	Minimum science credit requirement.
Ordinary (90 credit)	54

Degree type	Minimum science credit requirement.
Honours (120 credit)	66
Honours Double Maj	66
Honours Major/Minor	87
Specialized Honours	78

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Appendix A

Explore Categories and Associated Rubrics

Creativity and Cultures	**LA&PS** Modern Languages*, CCY; CLST; CLTR; EN; GK; HUMA; LA; PHIL; RLST **AMPD:** ARTH; FILM; MUSI; THEA; VISA **GL:** DRCA, DRST; ENSL; FRAN; FSL; LIN
Social Worlds	**LA&PS** ANTH; CRIM; ECON; GLBL; GWST; HIST; HREQ; INDG; POLS; SOCI; SOSC; SXST **EUC:** ENVS **Health:** GH; HLST; IHST **Science:** STSO **GL:** CDNS; ILST
Scientific Foundations	**Science** BIOL; CHEM; MATH; NATS; PHYS **EUC:** GEOG **Health:** KINE; PSYC;
Inquiry In Action	**LA&PS:** CMDS; DEMS; DLLL; ESL; FINT; HRM; ITEC; LING; MODR; PPAS; PRWR; SOWK; SPRT; WRIT **APMD:** CRTE; CMA; DESN; PANF **LSE:** TECL; CSSD; EECS; ESSE **ED:** EDST; EDUC **Health:** IPH **GL:** BUEC; COMS; LIN; TRAN;

*Modern Languages: ARB, ASL, CH, FR, GER, GKM, HEB, HND, IT, JC, JP, KOR, PERS, POR, SP, SWAH

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