

Core and Prescribed 100 level Units Offered in Trimester 3 - option for Three 100 level Units in a Major, Guideline

Section 1 - Rationale and Scope

(1) The introduction of trimesters poses the problem for some Schools and disciplines of modifying the School's traditional cycle of offerings in a way that facilitates flexible student entry and progression in majors and awards throughout a student's enrolment. The way that this problem is resolved has significant implications for new and revised unit development, as well as for academic and general staff workforce planning.

(2) A third 100-level unit in a discipline cannot be a mandatory or required unit. Rather, three 100-level prescribed units can be listed in each major and students can be required to take any two of these units (i.e. complete any 12 of an available 18 credit points). Students can elect which two units they take. This increases flexibility for students and for the discipline, and enhances student choice.

(3) Some students may elect to complete all three prescribed units. Some may elect to take a T3 unit instead of a T1 or T2 unit if that is a more attractive option for them. Some may opt for accelerated progression. Some may elect only to study in T1 and T2, and existing choices will remain available to them. Nothing is being taken away from this last group of students — they will continue to have two 100-level units available to them. No one is disadvantaged.

(4) This requires disciplines to give careful thought to 100-level unit content and pedagogy, in order to ensure that no matter which two 100-level units students take they can proceed to upper-level units with the appropriate knowledge and skills. Consideration also needs to be given to available staff resources and workloads within the discipline.

(5) Offering three 100-level units in a discipline or major may increase load. It also offers greater flexibility. The trimester in which these units are offered can be rotated from time to time to accommodate staff Special Studies Program and long-service leave.

(6) In some cases the most cost-effective way for a discipline buying into T3, wishing to provide an entry point in the discipline in all trimesters, and wishing to provide a progression pathway within the discipline or major at 100 level, may be to offer a third 100-level unit and to offer each of three first-year units in different trimesters and only once per year. Provided that a third core or prescribed 100-level unit offered in T3 is not mandatory for students, it should not have to be offered in another trimester.

(7) This model was discussed and supported by an Academic Board Think Tank in May and July 2013.

Section 2 - Principles

Course Mapping

(8) As part of the course mapping project in a number of Schools, one issue flagged for majors with two 100-level units is how to provide an entry point in each trimester. Some disciplines have elected not to offer a 100-level unit in T3, at least not on a regular basis. For those disciplines buying into T3 at 100 level, various options have been considered.

These include whether to offer new units specifically in T3, or whether T1 and T2 units can be reoffered twice in a year in such a way that there is always an entry point for commencing students and a pathway onwards in a major. Page | 1

Options for T3 at 100 level:

(9) Option 1: repeat a T1 unit in T3

(10) While this avoids developing and teaching a new unit, and offers progression from T2 to T3, thus allowing an accelerated program of study, it may split load across offerings, it may reduce load in the following T1, and it does not provide a progression pathway in the major from T3 to T1.

(11) Option 2: repeat a T2 unit in T3

(12) This option only works if the T2 unit does not require the T1 unit as a prerequisite. It avoids developing and teaching a new unit, offers progression from T3 to T1, but may split load across trimesters and does not provide a progression pathway in the major from T2 to T3.

(13) Option 3: repeat T1 unit in T3 and T2 unit in T1

(14) Again no new unit is required and it solves entry point and progression issues regardless of which trimester students commence their study provided that the T2 unit does not have the T1 unit as a prerequisite. However, the discipline must teach both units twice for a total of four 100-level teaching sessions in a year, it splits load, has high staffing costs, is an inefficient use of resources, and there are potential difficulties if teaching staff are on leave.

(15) Option 4: repeat both the T1 and T2 units in T3

(16) This is a variant of option 3 no new unit is required, it solves entry point and progression issues if there are no prerequisites for the T2 unit, but has the same disadvantages as option 3. Arguably the staffing and resourcing implications are even greater including shifting more staff to T3 teaching or increased use of casual teaching and marking.

(17) Option 5: third 100-level unit offered in T3 only

(18) This requires development of a new unit and thus has higher up-front costs, students not studying in T3 may not have the opportunity to take the unit, but it solves entry point and progression issues, possibly avoids splitting load, may attract some additional load, ongoing costs are lower as discipline only has three 100-level teaching sessions in a year, and is therefore arguably a more efficient use of resources and provides greater flexibility as a suite of 100-level units can be rotated in different trimesters to accommodate staff leave (thus overcoming one of the disadvantages noted above).

Table 1 Discipline/Major 100- level options			
Option	T1	T2	T3
Repeat a T1 unit in T3	100	101	100
Repeat a T2 unit in T3	100	101	101
Repeat T1 unit in T3 and T2 unit in T1	100	101	100
Repeat both the T1 and T2 units in T3	101	101	100,101
Third 100-level unit offered in T3 only	100	101	102

Evaluation of options

(19) If the goal is to provide an entry point within a discipline/major at 100 level in all trimesters, and to provide a progression pathway at 100 level within a discipline/major no matter the trimester in which a student commences their study, then options 1 and 2 simply do not work. Reoffering T1 or T2 units in T3 presents problems for those students wishing to progress at 100 level in the same discipline/major. Depending on when a student commences study, a second 100-level unit may not be available. Informal feedback from existing 100-level students indicates a strong preference for being able to complete first-year units in a discipline/major in consecutive study periods.

(20) Options 3 and 4 work, but split load, and also possess the disadvantage of requiring the most inefficient ongoing use of resources.

(21) Option 5, that is a third 100-level unit offered in T3, is the only option that fully resolves entry point and progression problems, and does so without the costs and inefficiencies of having four 100-level teaching sessions in a single year in a discipline/major. There are greater up-front costs in unit development, but lower ongoing teaching costs compared to options 3 and 4. This is the most effective and efficient solution for the entry point/progression issue within majors/disciplines.

(22) In short, the development of some new 100-level T3 units constitutes a viable way forward for some disciplines to provide an entry point in all trimesters and to resolve any issues with progression at 100 level within the discipline, and to do so in the most efficient manner.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	27th July 2015
Review Date	16th September 2016
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	16th September 2013
Expiry Date	19th April 2017
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