APC Recommendation on Divisional Studies Requirement for CAS Students

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Recommendation

The APC recommends that CAS continue the suspension of the Divisional Studies requirement for CAS students to August 31, 2024. Another vote on the Divisional Studies requirements will be taken in Fall 2023.

Rationale

From the course enrollment data, there are some clear trends that show CAS students who graduated in Spring 2022 (the first class that was required to fulfill the BU Hub requirements) did not receive the same type of broad disciplinary exposure outside their major as they would have received under the Divisional Studies requirement. That is, there are clear ways in which the BU Hub has diminished the liberal education of CAS students (as compared to the Divisional Studies).

Other trends in the data are less clear; with data from only one “BU Hub” class in hand, it’s difficult to truly assess the strength of these trends.

It is not clear whether the imposition of a Divisional Studies requirement (in addition to the BU Hub requirement) would create too many logistical challenges. Time is needed to assess whether the desired gain – a requirement of broad disciplinary exposure outside a students’ major discipline – is both possible and practical. Considerations on this matter include (but are likely not limited to): advising challenges, sufficient availability of seats in appropriate classes, and, potentially, recruitment challenges.

Reminder: What was/is the Divisional Studies Requirement?

The 2017-2018 Bulletin contains the most recent statement of the suspended CAS requirements and is available via the link below:

https://www.bu.edu/academics/archive/2017-2018/cas/programs/divisional-studies/

From the 2017-2018 Bulletin,

“Divisional Studies is an alternative to the Core Curriculum for fulfilling the general education breadth requirements. To develop a broad perspective that supports and strengthens studies in the major, the program requires students to select courses from a specified group in each of the principal divisions of the liberal arts: humanities, mathematics and computer science, natural sciences, and social sciences. Divisional Studies courses are suitable for non-majors as an introduction to a discipline’s area of study and the tools by which new knowledge is gathered. Whenever possible, Divisional Studies courses include direct experience in basic methods such as laboratory and fieldwork.”
*Divisional Studies requires six one-semester Divisional Studies courses, two in each of the three divisions outside the division of the major. At least one divisional course completed in the division of natural sciences must be designated as including a laboratory component."

Note: only specific CAS courses could be used towards completion of the Divisional Studies requirement (see the text above). The list of Divisional Studies courses from 2017-2018 can be found by following the link above.

**FAQs**

Q. What’s the difference between the BU Hub and the CAS Divisional Studies requirements?
The BU Hub is a university-wide curriculum and requirement that focuses on the acquisition of core competencies. The Divisional Studies is a college-level curriculum and requirement (controlled by the CAS faculty) that focuses on broad knowledge and the acquisition of depth of understanding within disciplines that fall outside the disciplines of the students’ majors. In principle, students could acquire all the BU Hub core competencies by taking only courses that are part of the students’ major.

Q. What, exactly, are we voting on?
In December 2017, in response to the University’s adoption of the BU Hub, the CAS faculty affirmed its authority over CAS-level requirements. In two subsequent votes, the CAS faculty suspended CAS’s Divisional Studies requirement through August 31, 2023. We are voting to determine what will happen to this requirement after August 31, 2023 (that is, for next year’s entering first-year class). Options include permanently retiring the requirement, extending the suspension, and allowing the current suspension to lapse (which would result in the requirement being reinstated). *The APC recommends that we vote to extend the suspension through August 31, 2024.*

Q. Can we vote to change the BU Hub?
No. The CAS faculty has no authority to modify the BU Hub.

Q. Can we vote to restrict the courses through which CAS students can satisfy the BU Hub?
Not directly. Individual schools and colleges may not prescribe how their students complete the BU Hub, since that requirement is the same for all BU students. However, the CAS faculty could, in theory, create CAS-level requirements that would have the practical effect of restricting how CAS students complete the BU Hub.
Enrollment Trends outside the Major Discipline:
average of 2018-2021 graduating seniors vs. 2022 graduating seniors
(Also see the charts on the following pages)

There are clear enrollment trends away from exposure to natural science (NS) classes and
mathematical & computational science (MCS) classes. There is no trend away from exposure to
humanities (HU) classes. There appears to be a trend toward increased exposure to social
science (SS) classes. Below, “significant” indicates that the difference between the 2022 data
and the average of the 2018-2021 data formally exceeds two standard deviations (also see the
tables on the following pages).

Humanities (HU) Majors:
- **Significant decrease** in the percentage of students who earned at least 8 credit hours in
  MCS courses (70% vs. 45%)
- **Significant decrease** in the percentage of students who earned at least 8 credit hours in
  NS courses of any type (69% vs. 42%)
- No significant change in the percentage of students who earned at least 8 credit hours
  in SS courses (64% vs. 65%)
- **Significant decrease** in the percentage of students who took at least one NS lab course
  (74% vs. 57%)

1Mathematical & Computational Sciences (MCS) Majors:
- No significant change in the percentage of students who earned at least 8 credit hours
  in HU courses (93% vs. 92%)
- **Significant decrease** in the percentage of students who earned at least 8 credit hours in
  NS courses of any type (69% vs. 47%)
- **Significant increase** in the percentage of students who earned at least 8 credit hours in
  SS courses (21% vs. 35%)
- **Significant decrease** in the percentage of students who took at least one NS lab course
  (69% vs. 48%)

2Natural Sciences (NS) Majors:
- No significant change in the percentage of students who earned at least 8 credit hours
  in HU courses (93% vs. 93%)
- **Significant decrease** in the percentage of students who earned at least 8 credit hours in
  MCS courses (82% vs. 73%)
- **Significant increase** in the percentage of students who earned at least 8 credit hours in
  SS courses (31% vs. 40%)

Social Sciences (SS) Majors:
- No significant change in the percentage of students who earned at least 8 credit hours
  in HU courses (96% vs. 98%)
• **Significant decrease** in the percentage of students who earned at least 8 credit hours in MCS courses (86% vs. 77%)
• **Significant decrease** in the percentage of students who earned at least 8 credit hours in NS courses of any type (63% vs. 44%)
• **Significant decrease** in the percentage of students who took at least one NS lab class (70% vs. 43%)

1 includes Economics majors in this analysis
2 includes Psychology majors in this analysis
Percentage of non-HU majors who earned at least 8 credit hours in HU courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018-2021 average</th>
<th>2022 value</th>
<th>Standard deviation for 2018-2021 average, s</th>
<th>Significance of trend (in units of s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MCS majors</td>
<td>92.69</td>
<td>92.34</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS majors</td>
<td>93.17</td>
<td>93.19</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>SS majors</td>
<td>96.38</td>
<td>98.22</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of non-MCS majors who earned at least 8 credit hours in MCS courses

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018-2021 average</th>
<th>2022 value</th>
<th>Standard deviation for 2018-2021 average, s</th>
<th>Significance of trend (in units of s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HU majors</td>
<td>70.03</td>
<td>44.55</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS majors</td>
<td>82.00</td>
<td>73.11</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS majors</td>
<td>62.93</td>
<td>43.56</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>3.71</td>
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</table>
Percentage of non-NS majors who earned at least 8 credit hours in any type of NS course

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018-2021 average</th>
<th>2022 value</th>
<th>Standard deviation for 2018-2021 average, s</th>
<th>Significance of trend (in units of s)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HU majors</td>
<td>68.89</td>
<td>41.58</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>14.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCS majors</td>
<td>69.04</td>
<td>47.23</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>14.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>SS majors</td>
<td>62.93</td>
<td>43.56</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>3.71</td>
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Percentage of non-SS majors who earned at least 8 credit hours in SS courses

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018-2021 average</th>
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<th>Standard deviation for 2018-2021 average, s</th>
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<tr>
<td>HU majors</td>
<td>64.13</td>
<td>65.35</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCS majors</td>
<td>20.51</td>
<td>35.11</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>5.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS majors</td>
<td>31.10</td>
<td>39.78</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>4.59</td>
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</table>
Percentage of non-NS majors who took at least one NS lab course

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>2018-2021 average</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>Standard deviation for 2018-2021 average, $s$</th>
<th>Significance of trend (in units of $s$)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HU majors</td>
<td>73.68</td>
<td>57.43</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>28.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCS majors</td>
<td>68.68</td>
<td>48.09</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>8.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS majors</td>
<td>69.57</td>
<td>43.11</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>6.57</td>
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</table>
Appendix A: A Brief History of CAS-level Requirements

The following survey is based on past undergraduate bulletins (dating from the late 1800s), Professor Warren Ault’s 1973 institutional history of the College of Liberal Arts (renamed the College of Arts & Sciences in 1996), and minutes of recent (2017 and after) CAS faculty meetings and accompanying documents.

In its first year of operation 150 years ago (1873-1874), the College of Liberal Arts did not have a general education or distribution requirement as we conceive of one today. As the catalogue at the time stated, “the aim of the college is to give that liberal education which is the true preparation for the study of a learned profession, or for a life devotion to letters, education, or public affairs. It accordingly provides thorough and systematic instruction in all three branches of literature, philosophy, and science known as the liberal arts.” Instead, all students took a prescribed curriculum during the freshman and sophomore years that consisted of required courses in Latin, Greek, German, French, English Composition, Greek and Roman History, and Mathematics. Rhetorical Exercises and Elocution were required throughout those years as well. In their remaining years, students studied Physical Science, including Physics, Chemistry, and Geology (all taught through a special arrangement with MIT) and Biology, Botany, Zoology, and Physiology (through an arrangement with the Boston Society of Natural History). Electives included mostly two-hour courses in Anglo-Saxon, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Spanish, Italian, Astronomy, or Roman Law.

In 1889-1890, the College’s course catalogue was classified into groups for the very first time “to facilitate insight into their vital unity and organic connections.” Groupings included: (1) Oriental Languages and Civilizations, (2) Languages, Literatures, and Civilization of Ancient Greece and Rome, (3) English Language, Literature and History, (4) Languages, Literature, and History of Modern Continental Europe, (5) Philosophy and Ethics, (6) History, (7) Economics, Law and Social Science, (8) Mathematics, Physics, and Astronomy, (9) Chemistry, Biology, and Geology, and (10) Life, Personal Development, Expression.

The balance of required courses and elected courses vacillated in the early 1900s. The number of free electives increased until 1904 when electives made up approximately two-thirds of the curriculum. However, majors and minors were introduced for the first time in 1907 as a counterbalance to free electives. In 1917, the degree requirements were revised and included the first semblance of a distribution requirement since, in addition to a major and minor, students were also required to elect 10 hours of coursework from each of six groups: (1) English, Language and Literature, Public Speaking, Music, Art, (2) Foreign Languages, (3) History and Social Science, (4) Education, Economics, (5) Mathematics and Philosophy, and (6) Natural Sciences.

In the mid-1920s, a faculty committee, taking two years and four months for the task, again revised the curriculum by scrapping the major and the minor in favor of “Fields of Concentration” made up of “Principal” and “Related” courses. This change prompted one
faculty member, a Prof. Wilm, to declare the new curriculum, “weak, apologetic, and largely irrational.”

By the mid-1940s, the University had initiated its first large-scale strategic plan to focus their now-unwieldly operation after World War II. Thanks, in part, to the GI Bill, the total enrollment had increased from 12,000 to 25,000 students in just two years alone. These were also the years of a nation-wide emphasis on general education (cf. Harvard’s “Red Book” from 1945). As a result, the College revised its program of study to include a required course in English Composition and a requirement that every student demonstrate proficiency in one “foreign language.” The College then continued its “distribution requirement” and proclaimed that “both for self-development and social usefulness every student requires a measure of understanding in three great fields of knowledge.” Students thereby took 12 credits in the field of Literature and the Arts, 12 credits in the field of Mathematics and Sciences, and 15 credits in the field of Social Sciences. In 1968, the curriculum was again revised to recalculate that students take six courses (instead of credits) in each of the three above-mentioned groups as its “distribution” requirement. No course involving laboratory work was required. A motion to do away with all distribution requirements was defeated by a single vote.

The term “divisional studies” was first used as a replacement for “distribution requirements” in the 1978-1979 Bulletin. In that same academic year, a Mathematics proficiency requirement was added to the existing College-level requirements in English Composition and Foreign Language. In the Fall of 1989, the Core Curriculum was inaugurated and served as an alternative path to satisfying the Divisional Studies requirement.

A fourth divisional area (Mathematics and Computational Sciences) was introduced in the 1995-1996 academic year, and it was further stipulated that at least one divisional course completed in the division of natural sciences include a laboratory component. In 1996, the College also changed its name from the College of Liberal Arts to the College of Arts & Sciences.

In Spring 2016, the University Council adopted the BU Hub as a requirement for all BU undergraduates entering in Fall 2018 or after and for all transfer students entering in Fall 2020 or after. The interpretation by BU’s central administration was that, in adopting the BU Hub, the University Council had also removed and replaced the respective general education requirements of BU’s various colleges and schools. In response, the CAS faculty voted in 2017 to affirm its authority over College-level requirements and, over the next two years, enacted a series of motions that culminated in the suspension of the “Divisional Studies” requirements through August 31, 2023. At its December 4, 2019 meeting, the CAS faculty adopted the following motion (90 in favor, 17 opposed, 2 abstentions):

The CAS faculty extends the suspension of the Divisional Studies requirements to August 31, 2023 (when the first entering class of CAS undergraduates to fulfill the BU Hub requirements will have completed its four years). Another vote on the Divisional Studies requirements will be taken in Fall 2022.
For a more detailed account of these motions, see the APC’s “Recommendation to the CAS Faculty Regarding the CAS Divisional Studies Requirements,” shared with the CAS faculty along with other materials prior to its November 6, 2019 meeting, as well as the minutes to the relevant CAS faculty meetings.
https://www.bu.edu/cas/materials-for-discussion-of-divisional-studies-requirements/

Appendix B: CAS BA Requirements 2017-2018

The 2017-2018 Bulletin contains the most recent statement of the suspended CAS requirements, available here:
https://www.bu.edu/academics/archive/2017-2018/cas/programs/

Before the advent of the BU Hub, the CAS BA degree required students to complete (in addition to a major) “Foundational Skills” requirements in Writing, Foreign Languages, and Mathematics and a “General Education Breadth” requirement, which could be satisfied through either the Core Curriculum or Divisional Studies. Students who entered the University as first-year students before Fall 2018 or as transfer students before Fall 2020 were subject to these requirements, the most recent version of which appears in the 2017-2018 Bulletin.

Note: The College faculty has commonly used the phrase “Divisional Studies” to refer to the totality of these requirements (i.e., not just the specific Divisional Studies pathway through the General Education Breadth” requirement more narrowly). Thus, the College’s various motions regarding “Divisional Studies” precipitate by the BU Hub may be interpreted either as applying to all of these requirements together or as acknowledgment that the Foundational Skills requirements tacitly retired. In Fall 2017, after the University’s adoption of the BU Hub, the CAS voted to adopt a new Second Language requirement, which is a modest revision of the Foreign Language requirement included in the College’s Foundational Skills requirements. This Second Language requirement appeared for the first time in the 2018-2019 Bulletin, which is also the first edition of the Bulletin to include the BU Hub requirement.

As delineated in the 2017-2018 Bulletin, the “Divisional Studies” pathway through the General Education Breadth requirement involved completion of “six one-semester Divisional Studies courses, two in each of the three divisions outside the division of the major,” with at least one of the natural science courses “designated as including a laboratory component.” These requirements could not be satisfied by any course in given division but only by specifically designated “Divisional Studies” courses listed in the Bulletin.
Appendix C: Background Materials/Timeline

Minutes of CAS Faculty Meeting (November 28, 2017):
CAS faculty discusses revised Second Language requirement, pursuant to an electronic vote.

Minutes of CAS Faculty Meeting (December 14, 2017):
CAS faculty votes to affirm its authority over CAS Divisional Studies requirements; minutes confirm the electronic vote adopting revised Second Language requirement.
https://www.bu.edu/cas/files/2011/12/Faculty-Meeting-minutes-121417.pdf

Minutes of CAS Faculty Meeting (February 14, 2018):
CAS faculty discusses motion to permanently suspend CAS Divisional Studies requirements; no vote because there was no quorum.
https://www.bu.edu/cas/files/2011/12/Faculty-Meeting-minutes-021418.pdf

Electronic vote (March 6, 2018):
CAS faculty vote to suspend Divisional Studies requirements for first-year students matriculating between September 1, 2018 and August 31, 2020.

Minutes of CAS Faculty Meeting (November 6, 2019):
CAS faculty discusses APC motion to continue suspension of Divisional Studies requirements through August 31, 2023.
https://www.bu.edu/cas/files/_restricted/cas-faculty-meeting-voting-faculty/November-6-Faculty-Meeting-Minutes.pdf

As background to this meeting, the APC provided the following materials:
https://www.bu.edu/cas/materials-for-discussion-of-divisional-studies-requirements/

APC Recommendation to the CAS Faculty Regarding the CAS Divisional Studies Requirements
This document offers a brief history of the BU Hub and the CAS votes in 2017–2018 that led to the suspension of the Divisional Studies requirements, the APC’s proposal regarding the Divisional Studies requirements, and additional suggestions and recommendations.

APC-GECC Subcommittee Report to the APC (April 2019)
This report was drafted for the APC by a joint subcommittee comprising members of the APC and the CAS General Education Curriculum Committee (GECC). The report was submitted to the APC in April 2019 along with supporting data and has informed the APC’s discussions of the Divisional Studies requirements, CAS-specific BA requirements, and the BU Hub.
These supporting data were provided to the APC by the APC-GECC subcommittee.

**10-Year Enrollment Data Trend in CAS Courses (including First Year of Hub)**
This dynamic Excel spreadsheet captures year-to-year departmental enrollments over the past 10 years (including the first year in the BU Hub). Enrollments are captured on a semesterly basis and are disaggregated by CAS Freshmen, Non-CAS Freshmen, CAS Upperclassmen, and Non-CAS Upperclassmen. Departments are also categorized into Divisions (HU, MCS, NS, and SS) for aggregate comparisons. The spreadsheet can be sorted and filtered for more focused analyses.

**CAS Hub Course Enrollments Fall’16, Fall’17, and Fall’18**
This Excel spreadsheet captures three Fall semesters worth of enrollment data (including the first fall semester of the BU Hub). Data is captured at the course level.

**CAS Hub Course Enrollments Spring’17, Spring’18, and Spring’19**
This Excel spreadsheet captures three Spring semesters worth of enrollment data (including the first spring semester of the BU Hub). Data is captured at the course level.

**CAS Majors: 10-Year Comparison**
This PDF document captures year-to-year counts of majors in each CAS degree program, including a 10-year percent change.

**Four-Year Plans for Science Majors (from CAS Advising)**
This folder provides a sampling of pathways for majors in science degree programs, including how those majors might possibly interface with the BU Hub.

**Minutes of CAS Faculty Meeting (December 4, 2019):**
CAS faculty votes to suspend Divisional Studies requirements through August 31, 2023.
[https://www.bu.edu/cas/files/__restricted/cas-faculty-staff/Faculty-Meeting-Minute-120419.pdf](https://www.bu.edu/cas/files/__restricted/cas-faculty-staff/Faculty-Meeting-Minute-120419.pdf)