

## Ryerson's Tripartite Curriculum

All programs at Ryerson University have a tripartite curriculum structure. This structure was developed in order to ensure that all Ryerson University students are exposed to a body of material from within their own discipline, a body of material relevant to their own discipline but delivered by other disciplines, and breadth in the form of material deliberately not from their own discipline. The goal is a well-rounded total package intended to emphasize a particular base of applied knowledge, but also to broaden the horizons of the student. Historically, the component elements of the Ryerson curriculum were **Professional** courses, **Professionally-Related** courses, and **Liberal Studies** electives. With the passage of Senate [Policy #2: Undergraduate Curriculum Structure](#) (Nov 2019), the structure was slightly modified, but the central principles remain. Detailed explanations follow.

**Professional courses** induce functional competence by presenting the knowledge and developing the skills characteristic of current practice in the career field. Courses in this category are offered by the “home” Department/School [in this case the Department of Politics and Public Administration], which has control over course content and delivery. Courses may be designated “required” (which means that they must be taken to fulfil degree or certificate requirements) or “elective” (which means that some number of courses must be selected from a list of available courses).

Professional courses in the *Politics and Governance* and the *Public Administration and Governance* programs have been developed specifically for the program and are taught by instructors whose academic appointment is to the Department of Politics and Public Administration. These courses focus on specific skills and knowledge sectors that are vital to a student’s success in the broader political community. In the new structure, these will be called **Core courses**.

Historically, **Professionally-Related courses** dealt directly with either issues related to students’ chosen profession from the perspective of another discipline, or covered central elements of a different, but related, profession deemed “related.” Each program Department/School at Ryerson approved a list of courses that it deemed “professionally-related” to the main discipline and career path, and that list was usually presented in a Table that appeared immediately following the program description in the Calendar. Professionally-Related courses could be designated “required” (which means that they must be taken to fulfil degree or certificate requirements) or “elective” (which means that some number of courses must be selected from a longer list of possibilities). Over time, the Professionally-Related Tables of most programs expanded enormously. Moreover, Professionally-Related courses not on the Table could be taken with advance departmental approval and completion of a “Course Directive” form by Dept/School authorities.

In the new curriculum structure, the Professionally-Related category disappears. Courses deemed central to the discipline/career that are not taught by the “home” Department/School (formerly “Required Professionally-Related”) will become part of the program’s **Core**. Other courses not so central to the students’ programs (formerly “Professionally-Related elective”) will become **Open Electives**. As the Senate policy explains: “The open electives category provides students with the opportunity, based on their career path or their personal interests, to choose degree-level courses outside their core or to gain greater depth and breadth within their core.” The central idea here is that students should have more choice in terms of what they take as electives, and that programs should not be unduly restrictive in this regard. Tables of Professionally-Related electives will disappear, as the new category of **Open Electives** will include almost all courses on offer in the University, except Liberal Studies electives and except courses that are excluded for reasons that are identified and articulated. In this way, student choice will be maximised.

**Liberal Studies electives** are courses that develop the capacity to understand the social and cultural context in which the graduate will work as a professional and live as an educated citizen. Liberal Studies are intended to enable students to experience disciplines outside their fields of professional specialization, which develop their capacity to understand and appraise their social and cultural context, and which expose the students to varied types and methods of reasoning and analysis and modes of communication.

**Liberal Studies, continued ...**

Specifically, Liberal Study courses aim to develop or improve critical thinking and analytic skills as well as to contribute to writing and oral communication skills.

In general, lower-level liberal studies are pitched to the level of first and second year students and, as such, will normally be introductory or survey courses. Upper-level courses will be more focused and more intellectually demanding, with the standards of evaluation reflecting those which should prevail at the advanced undergraduate degree level in any Ontario university. The courses are identified as "LL" and "UL" respectively, immediately following the course description in the Calendar.

All Liberal Studies courses contain a significant writing requirement and the quality of student work expected in this component must reflect the level of the course. Senate policy requires that a minimum of 25% of the total course grade be derived from a written assignment, and that the written assignment(s) total at least 1200 words for lower-level Liberal Studies electives and at least 1500 words for upper-level Liberal Studies electives. Students should expect these minima to be exceeded in most courses.

Students in the *Public Administration and Governance* (PAG) program are required to take three (3) lower-level and three (3) upper-level Liberal Studies electives. Students in the *Politics and Governance* (POG) program (and related double-majors) are required to take two lower-level and four upper-level Liberal Studies electives. In both programs, upper-level courses may be substituted for lower-level courses, but lower-level courses may not be substituted for upper-level courses. To achieve disciplinary breadth, students may not satisfy the Liberal Studies requirement of their program with courses taught by their Program Department. This means that PAG students, POG students (both single- and double-major) may not take POL courses for credit in the Liberal Studies category. However, POG students may take a maximum of two (2) Politics (POL) Upper Level Liberal Studies courses to satisfy **300-level** Table II requirements. Other "Restrictions," if any, are published in the Calendar immediately following each Table.

Students are offered a wide range of lower- and upper-level courses from the types of disciplines traditionally found in universities. The full range of courses available (and the program-specific restrictions) are presented as "Liberal Studies Curriculum" in the current calendar. Table A lists lower-level, and Table B lists upper-level Liberal Studies electives.

**Minors in the Tripartite Curriculum structure:**

Historically, Minors at Ryerson could only be earned when the Professionally-Related table of a student's program included sufficient courses from another discipline to satisfy the requirements of that Minor. Senate policy was amended to allow Liberal Studies electives to also satisfy Minor requirements, as long as the Liberal Studies electives are included in the list of Minor requirements. In other words, if a Minor is designed in such a way as to permit the satisfaction of its requirements with Liberal Studies electives, that is now permitted. For most Minors, however, the Minor requirements would have to be satisfied entirely with Professionally-Related electives (Open Electives), or through some combination of Professionally-Related (Open) and Liberal Studies electives.

All students interested in pursuing a Minor, regardless of their program of study, should consult the Minors section of the current [undergraduate calendar](#). PAG and POG students, as well as Students of other programs who are interested in obtaining one of the three Minors offered by the Department of Politics and Public Administration (*Global Politics and Development*, or *Politics*, or *Public Administration*) should consult the [Minors section](#) of the Department website.