

2023 - 2024

Curriculum Committee Year-End Report

May 2023

CC Members:

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The main tasks of the Curriculum Committee in 2023-2024 was to facilitate a conversation about grade inflation, which led to the revision of how we grant Latin Honors. Throughout the year we continued to approve courses that fulfill the new college-wide "Power, Inequity, and Justice" requirement and also approved minor curricular changes of multiple departments.

I. Conversations about Grade Inflation

Upon our charge from the previous academic year, we took up the task to facilitate conversations about grade inflation/grade improvement. Over the course of multiple faculty meetings (February 28; March 27); as well as chair's meeting in April we have asked our colleagues to think and reflect on our grading practices. At our last faculty meeting (May 17) we have provided a set of principles along with soft recommendations that we hope will guide faculty members and departments in thinking about the individual and departmental grading practices.

The set of principles include the following:

1. It is essential that design of course content and assessment be respected as the purview of individual faculty members.
2. Discussions about grade inflation/improvement should be conducted with the goal of expanding faculty members' individual understanding of their course goals and standards, and refining our collective understanding of departmental and College-wide goals and standards.
3. While the Provost might be consulted by individual faculty or chairs for guidance and support, these conversations and actions should not be orchestrated in a top-down manner. This is especially crucial given Bryn Mawr's institutional structure of Faculty Self Governance.

Our major recommendations (which are also included in the faculty packet for the May 17 meeting) are:

1. Registrar's Office provides an annual report at the first faculty meeting on (1) annual grade averages across divisions and the College, and (2) GPAs for Latin Honors categories in the previous academic year.
2. Provost's and Registrar's Offices introduce more robust introduction to the BMC grading scale for new TT, CNTT, & interim faculty at the annual New Faculty Orientation.

3. Chairs and mentors engage TT, CNTT, and interim faculty in review of their average-grades-granted as part of the mentoring and reappointment process.

a. The Provost's Office, Registrar's Office, and Faculty consider adding the average-grades-granted to course evaluation reports.

b. Departments undertake at least one dedicated conversation about grade inflation. Upon conferring with the faculty at present during our last faculty meeting (May 17) we also agreed that the Curriculum Committee will continue facilitating conversations about grading practices in the upcoming 2024-2025 academic year.

II. Latin Honors

At our initial discussion (February 28), we presented data on Latin Honors granted at BMC (Please see faculty packet for February 28 for the actual data). Following the faculty's expressed desire for the need to reform our existing Latin Honor system (over 80% of graduating seniors have been granted Latin Honors in the recent years), the committee presented on potential models of granting Latin Honors in our March faculty meeting (for the specific models and how BMC compared to them please see March faculty packet). For the April faculty meeting we produced a model that grants Latin Honors based on percentage (with the exception of Summa cum Laude) rather than GPA. The faculty voted to approve it in two votes held in April and May faculty meetings.

The new language of Curricular Rules, Section II, Part D.5 that determines how Latin Honors are awarded is below.

The Degree with Distinction. The three grades of the A.B. degree with distinction shall be *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, and *summa cum laude*. To calculate Latin Honors, the graduating class's GPAs will be ranked with CR/NCR grades uncovered. Neither this recalculated grade point average, the GPA ranking, nor the credit/no credit grades will appear on the student's transcript.

a. *Summa cum laude*: Students holding the top ten (approx. 3%) GPAs in the senior class, computed with CR/NCR grades uncovered, shall be eligible to receive the degree *summa cum laude*.

b. *Magna cum laude*: A student whose GPA computed with CR/NCR grades uncovered falls within the next 10% of GPAs shall receive the A.B. degree *magna cum laude*.

c. *Cum laude*: A student whose GPA computed with CR/NCR grades uncovered falls within the next 20% of GPAs shall receive the A.B. degree *cum laude*.

The changes will take effect with the class of 2029 (entering in fall 2025).

III. Implementation of Power, Inequity, and Justice" requirement

Throughout the year we approved over 10 courses that will count towards the new Power, Inequity, and Justice requirement. Upon our review, it seems that there are and will be a robust number of courses that fulfill the requirement.

IV. Curricular Overview of minor changes

Throughout the year we have approved minor changes to the majors of Computer Science, Political Science, Biology, some minor changes to the language of the Neuroscience Minor requirements and approved a course for Chemistry.

The new 400-level Thesis Option course for Computer Science majors will provide an opportunity for seniors to produce a thesis. The Biology Department's changes to the senior seminar experience eliminated the Senior Seminar (Biol 398) option and introduced an expanded selection of 300-level literature-based courses that can serve as senior capstones. The Political Science department replaced their former requirement of "One 300-level course" outside of a major's two concentrations with "One Attention to Research in Political Science" Requirement. The new requirement helps to focus instructors and students on building research skills and also allow for the inclusion of research and methods courses taught at the 200-level. CC also approved a new Problem Solving Chemistry course for Fall 2024 that aims to prepares students who have successfully completed QSEM for the introductory chemistry sequence. Finally, we approached minor changes to the language of Neuroscience Minor requirements that synchronized the language of the minor and major requirements.