

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

S.80-108

MEMORANDUM

To Senate

From Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies

Subject Graduate Curriculum Changes - Department of English

Date July 14, 1980

MOTION: That Senate approve and recommend approval to the Board, as set forth in S.80-108 - Graduate Curriculum Changes in the Department of English.

These changes were approved by the Senate Graduate Studies Committee on July 14, 1980.

Bryan P. Beirne  
Dean of Graduate Studies

mm/  
attachs.

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

## MEMORANDUM

To..... Ms. M. McGinn, Asst. Registrar.....  
..... Graduate Studies.....  
Subject.. Curriculum Changes - English.....

From... W.L. Cleveland, Chairman.....  
..... Faculty of Arts Graduate Studies Committee.....  
Date... April 28, 1980.....

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The Faculty of Arts Graduate Studies Committee approved the curriculum changes submitted by the Department of English

Would you please put the attached submission on the agenda of the next Senate Graduate Studies Committee.

Thank you.

*W.L. Cleveland / S. Roberts*

W.L. Cleveland

Attachment

c.c. H.M. Evans, Registrar

These changes were approved by the Executive Committee, Senate Graduate Studies Committee, on June 16, 1980.

Curriculum Changes

p. 70 M.A. Program - PRESENT ENTRY: "The Department's M.A. programs are intended to serve graduate students in several ways. It is hoped that they will develop critical acumen and mature habits of reasoning about literary problems and texts, familiarize themselves with as broad a spectrum of literary types and periods as is reasonable within the program chosen, and acquire special knowledge and competence of expression in the field or fields to which the thesis or group of essays relates. Within these general aims the student may elect one of two options within the Department, depending on what kind of emphasis in training and experience is desired. Each program is designed to be complete in itself or to lead to further graduate study."

ADD FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH: "The Department recognizes the special needs of persons already working who may wish to improve their qualifications. Some graduate courses will regularly be offered at night, and part-time studies are permitted (though University regulations require that all M.A. students must complete their work within five calendar years of their first enrollment)."

RATIONALE: This new paragraph is meant to encourage people already employed, and especially high-school English teachers, to return to SFU for an M.A.

p. 70 A. Thesis Program - FROM: "A minimum of 20 semester hours of graduate courses is required in addition to a thesis; no fewer than three courses (15 hours) are to be taken as seminars, with any reading course to be used to follow special interests not available through formal course work during the student's residence. The emphasis of this program falls upon the preparation for and execution of a high quality M.A. thesis amounting to a study in depth. The program is intended for the student who wishes to persue intensively a particular course of study relating to an individual author, body of ideas, or critical approach, but its election does not preclude a more general course of study which finds completion in a thesis on some aspect of that study."

TO: "A minimum of 20 semester hours of graduate seminars is required in addition to a thesis. By permission of the Chairman of the Graduate

Program Committee, one directed reading course may be substituted for a seminar. Reading courses should be used only to follow special interests not available through formal course work during the student's residence. The emphasis of this program falls upon the preparation for and execution of a high quality M.A. thesis amounting to a study in depth. The thesis is an introduction to advanced criticism and research in the humanities: it need not be an exhaustive treatment of its subject. The normal length of a thesis will be 60-120 pages."

RATIONALE: There are two significant changes here: -

- a) The permission of the Graduate Chairperson is now required for enrolment in 841 (Directed Studies). This provides some control over the inclination of graduate students to automatically take 841 as an easier or more congenial substitute for a seminar. Sometimes the reasons for doing so are quite legitimate, but the global effects are often damaging to the program as a whole, for at least 3 reasons: -
- 1) Supervision of 841 increases faculty workload considerably, and the extra burden is unevenly distributed.
  - 2) Enrolment in 841 reduced enrolment in seminars proportionally, so that we can offer fewer seminars; a vicious circle has been operating here for several years now. Effectively, the number of seminars available has dropped from 5 to 4, and this term to 3.
  - 3) Some students use 841 as a beginning of thesis work; this makes their program narrower than we would like. In general, the use of 841 contributes to earlier and more exclusive specialisation.
- There is a general feeling in the department, I think, that such specialisation is more appropriate to Ph.D. work than to the M.A.
- b) The normal length of a thesis is now specified; we feel that many theses have been too ambitiously conceived, resulting in monstrous and/or interminable projects.

p. 70 General Program - FROM: "Thirty semester hours of graduate courses are required in addition to the submission of three or four extended essays in lieu of a thesis; no fewer than four courses

(20 hours) are to be taken as seminars, with any reading course to be used to follow special interests not available through formal course work during the student's residence. The aim of this program is to develop a breadth of knowledge and competence over several areas of literary study. Extended essays are defined as scholarly papers that meet the same standards of excellence as a thesis. They will be examined in the same way as a thesis, prepared in the same format, bound, and placed in the Library."

TO: "Twenty-five semester hours of graduate seminars are required. By permission of the Chairman of the Graduate Program Committee, one directed reading course may be substituted for a seminar. Reading courses should be used only to follow special interests not available through formal course work during the student's residence. In addition, the student must submit two extended essays, of normally 25-40 pages each. Extended essays are defined as scholarly papers that meet the same standards of excellence as a thesis. They will be examined in the same way as a thesis, prepared in the same format, bound, and placed in the Library. The aim of this program is to develop a breadth of knowledge and competence over several areas of study."

RATIONALE: Three main changes: -

- a) The course requirements have been reduced from six to five.
- b) Two extended essays are now required, rather than three.

We feel that the General Program has been considerably more demanding than the Thesis Program; in consequence, only one M.A. student in 5 has chosen this option. With the new requirements, we would hope to see a more even split between Thesis and General Program students. This would also have the beneficial side effects, we hope, of 1) increasing course enrolment, and 2) allowing some students to finish sooner, and others with unfinished theses to complete their degrees by switching to this option.

- c) The normal length of an extended essay is now specified.

Examinations - FROM: "After the completion of each ten hours of course work, the student's Supervisory Committee, if one has been appointed by then, otherwise the Graduate Studies Chairman, will meet with the student to assess his or her progress and competence to complete the degree program, and send a written report on this assessment to the Departmental Graduate Committee with a copy to the student. While the General Regulations set the minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average necessary for continuance at 3.0, the English Department regards any course grade below B to be unsatisfactory and expects its students to achieve an average above the minimum. Any student whose progress is deemed unsatisfactory may be asked to withdraw under section 8.3 of the General Regulations.

A student on the thesis program will be given a preliminary oral examination by the semester preceding that of the thesis defence. The purpose of this examination shall be specifically to ascertain the extent of the student's command of the topic of the thesis. On completion of the examination a recommendation as to whether or not the student is adequately prepared shall be made and forwarded to the Departmental Graduate Program Committee. Students on the six-course program will not be subject to this examination, but nevertheless shall be required to defend the papers they have submitted in lieu of theses, in conformity with 10.1 of the General Regulations."

TO: "While the General Regulations set the minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average necessary for continuance at 3.0, the English Department regards any course grade below B to be unsatisfactory and expects its students to achieve an average above the minimum. Any student whose progress is deemed unsatisfactory may be asked to withdraw under section 8.3 of the General Regulations.

Students wishing to write a thesis must submit a prospectus and a bibliography of about 5-10 pages in all; they are advised to do so before the completion of their course work and in no case later than the semester following completion of course work. The student's proposal will be considered in oral examination by the supervisory committee together with a member of the Graduate Program Committee. The purpose of this exam is to de-

termine the feasibility of the thesis topic and to ascertain the student's command of the subject. Students must have the approval of this committee before proceeding further with the thesis. Students on the six-course program will not be subject to this examination, but nevertheless shall be required to defend the papers they have submitted in lieu of theses, in conformity with 10.1 of the General Regulations."

RATIONALE: These changes clarify and simplify examination requirements. They also move the preliminary thesis examination to an earlier stage, so that the student is given the formal advice of his/her supervisory committee at a point where he/she can best use it. We hope that this prospectus exam will save many students from going up blind alleys or undertaking impossible projects.