

2026 Curriculum Guide Overview

Above all, we must all recognize that our curriculum lies within the tension and overlap of competing interests: seeking to maximize Quality, Reach more students than ever before, within the Cost/resource constraints of BYU-Idaho.

One of the challenges we all face is the need to innovate and change while creating a sense of stability for students and faculty. Our goal is a simplified curriculum structure that simultaneously prepares students for their future roles. Innovation is anticipated but our goal is to do that deliberately and with input from outside advisory groups (formal or informal) to make sure that changes meet the needs of students and employers, and then to wait long enough to see if the changes made a difference. Our goal is to provide opportunities for improvement balanced against a somewhat stable curriculum. Additionally, life skills and professional skills should be woven naturally into the content and not simply be added on as an afterthought.

This page gives an overview of the curriculum review process. The packet provides the information necessary to direct deans, associate deans, and chairs in guiding programs towards our new curriculum. Follow the steps below to guide you through the process.

1. First, refer to the “Curriculum Guiding Principles” document to check mission alignment.
2. Review “Questions to Consider” page for guidance on proposals.
3. Review “New Curriculum Standards” page to ensure proposals meet standards.
4. Use our curriculum management tool (CMT) to submit all relevant information.

Once all the information has been gathered and documented in the CMT, the following workflow will allow the proposals to be vetted at all levels before implementation takes place.

1. Departments will be responsible for making sure all proposals have complete documentation and rationale and show an appropriate fit for the department. They can do this with a curriculum committee if they choose, but the department process will be left to the discretion of the Department Chair (Department Chairs give approval in our CMT).
2. Once approved at the department level, the curriculum will be vetted at the college level. Each college will create a college curriculum council that will be responsible for reviewing all proposals within its college. This council will look at need, fit, relevance, resource needs and requests, and adherence to all curriculum guidelines. Most curriculum proposals will be approved at this level with guidance from the Curriculum Executive Council to ensure consistency across the University and compatibility with current systems. When a proposal requires additional review, the Associate Dean requests a full University Curriculum Council discussion and review. (Associate Dean for Curriculum gives approval in our CMT).
3. The Curriculum Executive Council, consisting of the AAVP for Curriculum, Accreditation Liaison Officer, Student Development Manager, Director of Advising, and Registrar act as a resource to college curriculum councils in confirming proposals meet University guidelines and can be implemented within existing systems and resources. This council can also submit proposals to the full University Curriculum Council for review. (AAVP for Curriculum gives approval in our CMT).
4. New programs, IDS changes, General Education changes, fee changes, and increased resource requests may require additional approval at the Deans Council, President’s Council, Board of Trustees, and NWCCU level before any implementation can take place.

Curriculum Guiding Principles

The following are principles to help guide curriculum decisions. The first set of principles came from a visit of the Executive Committee of the Board to BYU-Idaho in September 2017 and came from discussions had around curriculum. These have not been defined but should give us all the opportunity to ponder what we are doing and how we are going about it.

1. Responsive Curricula
2. Set rules for simplification
3. Stackable curricula
4. Sequenced modularity
5. Elegant simplicity balanced with flexibility and comprehensibility for students
6. One of the constant questions we must ask ourselves: Should we be doing this (course, program, major)?
7. Importance of pruning – letting in the light vs extensive coverage of content
8. Importance of teaching practical skills
9. Importance of teaching eternal knowledge

The following principles are an attempt to condense relevant information around curricula from all the foundational addresses as well as input from Curriculum Council and Academic Council. After each principle are a few quotes from foundational documents that tie to that principle. All new curriculum proposals (new courses or programs) must show how they are meeting these 5 principles.

- 1. Mission alignment** – *Every innovation, every change, will be measured against this test of the heart: “How would this proposed change build testimony and true conversion to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in the heart of a student?” Developing and deepening our devotion as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this school in Zion in Rexburg . . . disciples can follow the Savior and learn of and from Him the lessons that will prepare them for effective service in their home, in the Church, and in their communities and careers. (President Eyring, Elder Bednar)*

Underlying everything we do should be a very deliberate focus on our mission. All curriculum decisions should consider this and seek to center changes on our mission.

- 2. Learning for life** - *Natural leaders who know how to teach and how to learn. Educating the whole man and woman. Prepare them for effective service in their homes, in the Church, and in their communities and careers. Curricular innovations that are less bachelor centric, including certificates and applied associate degrees. (President Eyring, Elder Bednar, President Gilbert)*

Our curriculum should be learning centered, applied, and experiential and should prepare graduates for their futures. We should also provide opportunities for our students to develop meta-cognitive learning skills that prepare them to continue to learn throughout their lives. Leadership is a central skill we want our students to develop and is closely tied to learning for life. Part of leadership is having the proper skills to be successful in navigating the ever-changing world we live in. Incorporate Institutional Learning Outcomes into programs to help students gain skills that are bigger than the discipline. Most of our curriculum should be tailored to the student type that makes up most of our student body, while recognizing the need for some exceptions in a few specialized areas.

- 3. Outcome driven, and quality tested** - *Create even more powerful and effective learning experiences in which students learn by faith. Learning and teaching processes at BYU-Idaho are focused and intense. We must develop more rigorous and holistic ways to measure and track student outcomes. Move forward rapidly even as we pause to thoroughly assess and evaluate our existing programs. (Elder Clark, Elder Bednar, President Gilbert)*

We need to transition from a traditional model of students simply jumping through hoops to graduate, toward a holistic model where students see how all the parts are connected and help them become. By developing intentional student learning outcomes and then finding ways to measure those outcomes, we can transform our education and bless students in many ways. Ideally, our programs will be based on learning outcomes and not simply a collection of courses. Everything we do should be improvement minded. We should seek to improve the quality of our programs, the learning of our students, and the success of our graduates. Effective assessment that is monitored will lead to quality improvements. Additionally, learning outcomes should be transparent to students. They should know what they are learning and how they can articulate that learning to potential employers.

- 4. Simple and flexible** - *Rethink and reevaluate many of our most fundamental assumptions about the processes of learning and teaching. Facilitate the integration of curriculum and pedagogy across traditional boundaries. Success will be determined by what a department or a major does to strengthen other departments and other majors across campus. We must begin with both the end and the beginning in mind. Frugal design, flexibility to change majors without incurring a graduation delay. Nesting of certificate and associate degree within the bachelor's program. (Elder Bednar, President Gilbert, President Henry J. Eyring)*

Because students are likely to work in multiple career types across their lifetime, we need to think holistically and creatively to create programs that integrate broad life-skills into the curriculum and create multi-disciplinary experiences where that makes sense. These programs need to be modular and stackable or nested with multiple entry and exit points while being clear and understandable for students to navigate. Where possible, students should be given marketable skills early, by focusing on application rather than just theory. We need to constantly think about what we are doing to integrate with and strengthen other areas of campus rather than focusing exclusively on our own area. Our efforts should provide students with ease of entry into a major and build relationships between students and faculty.

- 5. Frugality and focus** – *The school will need to change and even eliminate some long-standing and beneficial programs as the school focuses on key academic disciplines. Focus, not growth and spread, in academic offerings. Thoroughly assess and evaluate our existing programs. Better stewards of sacred resources. Higher quality experience while requiring relatively fewer resources per student. Faculty sacrifice what they do best and love most for what the Lord wants even more for our students. (President Hinckley, President Eyring, Elder Bednar, Elder Clark)*

We should focus our efforts on ways that best use resources to bless all students who choose to attend here. We should avoid unnecessary duplication of courses or programs across campus. Our programs should be as lean as possible in number of credits and in courses required. Innovation will be critical to doing this well. Resource stewardship also involves providing a clear path for students as they move through a program, so they do not have to spend more time than is necessary in obtaining in-house certificates or degrees. It also involves the effective use of physical space, faculty load, oversight by Department Chairs, and financial cost to the University and to students. An understanding of equipment and material cost/benefits is also central to this process. Our example of being frugal with resources and striving to do more with less will bless students as they apply that same pattern in their lives.

Questions to Consider

As a department or program considers changes to a course or program, please consider the following questions. Changes will not necessarily meet all the principles these questions raise, but they can provide context for making good, mission-aligned curricular decisions.

1. How would this proposed change build testimony and true conversion to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in the heart of a student?
2. Does the proposed change foster leadership experiences and opportunities for students to learn how to learn independently?
3. Does the resulting curriculum educate the whole person: spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and physically?
4. Does the proposed change cause the curriculum to spread, or become more focused? Is this an expansion of courses or programs? If it is, are there other areas where we can reduce?
5. Does the proposed change allow students to expand their ability to act?
6. Does the design facilitate access and success for all students?
7. What is the primary focus (employable opportunities, graduate school preparation, professional school, etc.)?
8. Does the proposed change promote curriculum that is modular and flexible?
9. Does the proposed change allow the department to serve more students within existing resources?
10. Does the proposed change strengthen other departments and programs across campus?
11. Are the learning outcomes central to the design of the course or program?
12. Are there transferable or soft skills that can be woven naturally into the course or program?

FOR MORE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER SEE the
[draft CURRICULUM COUNCIL CHECKLIST](#)

Curriculum Standards

The following standards will be the criteria by which all curricular changes will be evaluated.

1. Alignment with Guiding Principles – Justification information should reflect this alignment.
2. Student-Learning Outcome centric design of courses and programs – The syllabus or program justification must show how the student-learning outcomes are central and are incorporated into the course or program design. These student-learning outcomes should include both content and life-skills and should be mapped to the program student-learning outcomes.
3. Key assessments tied to each student-learning outcome – Each student-learning outcome should have a way of indicating how well it is being met. These assessments need to be sustainable and specific enough for improvements to be made in a periodic cycle. A well vetted map (course or program) must be included to show what assessments are being used to show outcome attainment at the course level and how all the courses fit together to achieve outcomes at the program level.
4. BYU-Idaho Learning Outcomes (ILOs) – These are outcomes we expect of all students who graduate from BYU-Idaho. They are measured at two levels – Within General Education and within each academic program. All the ILOs will be assessed in addition to the PLOs. Common rubrics for assessing the ILOs will be rolled out over the next couple semesters. The hope is that many, if not all courses will help students develop these skills and make that development visible to the students.

Program specific standards

5. Modular program design – Nesting or stacking of curriculum elements in ways that show deliberate design to bless the lives of all students.
6. Collaboration - All courses included in a program proposal outside the sponsoring department need to show that the other department has been contacted and agrees with the class being included in or removed from the program.
7. Certificate – Proposals must fit the following criteria:
 - a. Builds toward an employer identified skill set that will give students an advantage in the job market.
 - b. Has well defined outcomes and assessments that have been vetted and mapped and measure job skill development that is the focus of the certificate.
 - c. Must be between 12-15 credits. No option can take a student below 12 credits or above 15 credits.
 - d. Should be a specific set of classes with no or very limited optional classes.
 - e. If it is designated as an advanced certificate, the prerequisites must be included in the program of study.
 - f. Must be fully nested in an associate degree or bachelor's degree. This means that the certificate cannot have options that are not in the degree and the degree cannot have options that are not in the certificate.

Additional certificate considerations:

- Certificates will be evaluated during regular program reviews to determine if they are still meeting the established criteria and outcomes are being measured and met.
- Use other terms (option, module, cluster) to distinguish parts of a degree that do not fit the definition of a certificate.

- The word “certificate” should not be confusing to students about industry recognized “licensure” or “certification”.
 - Certificates will not be “officially” awarded unless at least 6 credits are completed with BYU-Idaho coursework.
 - Students cannot “declare” a certificate as their only path of study and be eligible for federal financial aid.
 - Subject to approval by the University Curriculum Council, Deans Council, President’s Council, the board, and NWCCU.
8. Cluster – 12-15 credits, mostly used as an advisory tool, not recognized by the NWCCU, approvals with UCC, No diploma, No PLOs, No Program Review.
 9. Concentration – 27-33 credits, Group of courses with **a concentrated focus within a discipline**, linked to the IDS degree program, not recognized by the NWCCU. Approvals with UCC and DC. No diploma. No PLOs. No Program Review.
 10. Minor – 18-25 credits, group of courses to give students **a broad understanding across a discipline**, recognized but not reported to NWCCU yet, Approvals with UCC, PEG, CES, and the Board. Shows on the transcript but not on the diploma. No Program Review yet.
 11. Emphasis area – Intended to provide minor additional focus to an existing degree. Should be a small subset of the program (preferably 9-15 credits). We have been asked to limit these.
 12. Standard bachelor’s degree – 40-55 credits – Target is 45 credits.
 13. Integrated standard degree – 56-67 credits, which is a standard degree plus 12-15 credits **from another area**. Limited to those who show a strong need for a particular combination of areas.
 14. Specialized degree – Limited to those with external accreditation requirements that are mandatory.
 15. Education degrees – These have very strict rules but do not fit any of the above categories exactly.

Course specific standards

16. No net new courses – If new courses are proposed, a plan for meeting the needs of those new courses within existing resources must be provided. Our hope is at least a 1:1 ratio of new courses with courses being discontinued.
17. Eliminate duplication of courses across departments – Departments work together to best meet the needs of students with the goal of minimizing or eliminating duplication.
18. Follow contact hour guidelines – These are based on Department of Education definitions including credit hours awarded and type of contact – 1 credit of “lecture” allows 1 instructor/student contact hour per week. 1 credit of “lab or guided instruction” allows 1-3 instructor/student contact hours per week. Total student workload, including contact hours, should be around 3 hours per week per credit for all courses.
19. Required course travel – If travel for a course requires students to spend time outside of regularly scheduled class times, it must be in the syllabus, be required of all sections, and demonstrate how it is necessary to meet course outcomes. For the benefit of students and colleagues across campus, this should be kept to a minimum, focusing only on the most necessary experiences.
20. Course fees – Should be minimized and must meet fee guidelines.
21. For courses which have multiple sections, common Student-Learning Outcomes, and Key assessments, which indicate common outcome attainment, must be the same. Teaching pedagogy can vary between sections and modes of delivery. Our curriculum management tool (CMT) will be the official repository of all common Student-Learning Outcomes. Any changes to these common Student-Learning Outcomes will need to go through the regular curriculum change process.

Types of Degrees Available

- **Associate of Applied Science (AAS):** 60-70 credit hours including major, general education, university requirements, and electives (will not transfer to fulfill general education requirements at other schools)
- **Associate of Art (AA):** 60 credit hours including major, general education, university requirements, and electives
- **Associate of Science (AS):** 60 credit hours including major, general education, university requirements, and electives
- **Bachelor of Art (BA):** 120 credit hours including major, general education, university requirements, and electives
- **Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN):** 120 credit hours including specialized major, general education, university requirements, and electives
- **Bachelor of Science (BS):** 120 credit hours including major, general education, university requirements, and electives
- **Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies (BIS):** 120 credit hours including major, 1 concentration and 1 certificate, cluster, or minor, general education, university requirements, and electives
- **Bachelor of Musical Arts (BMA):** 120 credit hours including specialized major, general education, university requirements, and electives
- **Bachelor of Music in Music Education (BMED):** 120 credit hours including specialized major, general education, university requirements, and electives
- **Bachelor of General Studies (BGS):** 120 credit hours including 30 credits in one area and 15 credits in a secondary area or 45 credits in a specific area, general education, university requirements, and electives
- **Bachelor of Music (BM):** 120 credit hours including specialized major, emphasis, and electives