

Curricular Realignment: Frequently Asked Questions

Following numerous conversations between members of the Working Group and the faculty the following questions have arisen. Below are answers proposed by the Working Group; we welcome your input.

Faculty Workload

What will the new experiential requirements and a reduction to a 32-credit graduation requirement mean for faculty workload?

The Working Group has paid particular attention to faculty workload in the construction of the current proposals. We have listened carefully to faculty concerns and endeavored to address issues that might result in workload inequities in creative and constructive ways. Even so, the Dean of Faculty's Office recognizes a longstanding need for a faculty-wide discussion on workload equity and will work with appropriate governance bodies next year to begin a discussion to address faculty workload issues.

How will this put extra stress on my STEM lab?

In an amendment to the working group's proposal for the research component of experiential learning, the Curriculum Committee has suggested allowing some lab courses that focus on research methods and original research to count towards the research requirement. We are also working to expand research opportunities outside of STEM subjects. In addition, the research part of the requirement already includes a range of paths outside of STEM labs including senior theses, summer research opportunities in the humanities, and approved research experiences undertaken while studying abroad. Students working on theatrical productions and on the Trinity Film Festival Board will count.

How will the internship part of the experiential requirement affect faculty workloads?

To be in line with the Study Away and Community Learning requirements, which are overseen by office directors in consultation with faculty advisory groups, the Working Group is proposing a full-time Director of Internships who oversees internships at Trinity. They will work with a faculty advisory group to ensure that all credit-bearing internships are properly academic and worthy of credit. While faculty could still personally advise students doing internships, this will no longer be necessary. The expectation is that this will slightly reduce faculty workloads overall. In addition to academic (credit-bearing) internships there will be non-academic internships that meet the federal guidelines for internships (that they be properly supervised in the workplace and not simply replace the work others might do for pay). These internships, while not earning credit, may nonetheless count towards the experiential requirement.

Student issues:

How will students with low GPAs complete the experiential requirement when some of the requirements require certain GPAs to enroll?

Various Study Away programs require certain GPAs. This is also true of certain internship opportunities. For study away, some programs are able to accept students with lower GPAs (as low as 2.5 currently), and there will be a rigorous petition process whereby students with low GPAs can present cases for exceptions to the minimal GPA requirement (albeit, this requirement is easier to waive for Trinity programs than for non-Trinity programs). Some J-term courses currently have no minimum GPA requirement. A new Director of Internships will work with faculty advisors to expand the number and type of internship opportunity available, such that there are some appropriate opportunities with no minimal GPA requirement. Students with a GPA below 2.0 will be on academic probation and will not be allowed to participate in experiential learning opportunities.

How will we deal with students who need to complete their requirement in the senior year?

To ensure timely completion of the experiential requirement students will be required to have completed one (out of two) element by the end of their junior year. If this does not happen a hold will be placed on their transcript until there is a workable plan in place.

If we move to a 32-credit graduation requirement, will Teaching Assistantships still count for credit in the new curriculum?

Yes – as is the case now – up to 2 credits can be counted towards the 32 credits needed for graduation. In addition, some TAships, as approved through an application process, may be designated as a special kind of internships and count as one half of the experiential requirement.

If we move to a 32-credit graduation requirement, will Physical Education courses still count for credit in the new curriculum?

They will still count for credit and appear on the transcript, but they will not count towards the 32 credits needed for graduation. The working group consulted with the director of Athletics, who supports this decision.

What does the proposed “Pathways” General Education requirement mean for the current general education requirements?

The proposal assumes that from the existing general education requirements, only the First-Year Seminar and the W2 (Writing Intensive course in Major) remain. The Q-Center, Math department, and Writing Center have endorsed the Quantitative Literacy and Writing Proficiency requirements; the endorsements can be found on the Curricular Realignment web site. Proficiency in a second language would no longer be required of all students, but second language study has a strong presence in the “Intercultural Communication and Expressive Practice” requirement of the IAP. Similarly, the “global” requirement has been eliminated, but two of the “Pathways” categories support study of global issues.

Financial issues:

Will the move from 36 to 32 credits have a negative financial impact on the college (as students could graduate earlier)?

As is common with other colleges in NESCAC we can introduce a residence requirement so that all students have to spend eight semesters at Trinity (including Study Away). Transfer students will be handled on a pro rata basis depending on when they arrive (i.e. a student arriving in their sophomore year would have to spend six semesters at Trinity (see [Williams College policy](#) for example).

How can we ensure access to experiential activities for our less well-off students?

The experiential requirement is deliberately designed to include a range of experiences that the vast majority of our students already do. It is true that an unpaid summer internship or a semester abroad (for instance) is more easily available to better off students. We have removed the study away fee for all students as part of our move to home school tuition and this has already made study away more accessible. The proposed curricular changes go hand-in-hand with a capital campaign that enthusiastically supports provision of resources to support universal access to experiential education. See [Colby's DavisConnects](#) program for an example.

Next steps

What potential requirements have not been discussed?

Two proposals that emerged from the strategic planning process that have not yet been discussed are a wellness requirement and an e-portfolio requirement. These requirements have been tabled for discussion next year.

If these measures pass, how and when will implementation occur?

The working group recommends the formation of an implementation committee to address any remaining details and oversee the transition to the new general curriculum. Transition entails working closely with appropriate faculty governance committees (especially the Curriculum Committee, which would presumably oversee the implementation committee), as well as diverse offices across campus, including the Registrar's Office, IT, CHER, OSA, and Career Development. The goal would be to implement the new curriculum for first-year students entering in 2020.