

2013/2014 **STATE OF EDUCATION** **ADVOCACY DOCUMENT**

Prepared by:
The McMaster Academic Affairs Council (AAC)





2013/2014 STATE OF EDUCATION ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

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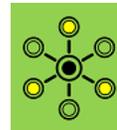
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OVERVIEW

The Academic Affairs Council of the McMaster Students Union (MSU) is pleased to release the first annual State of Education report to students, faculty members, university administration, and community members. This report highlights the collaborative work of students from the MSU and every faculty society from across McMaster University. As students, we take pride in being members of the McMaster community; not everyone receives the opportunity to attend a world-class institution such as ours. However, students are also concerned about access to quality educational experiences within our university.

The State of Education Report is designed to provide a snapshot of each faculty through a variety of student lenses, with an emphasis on how each faculty shapes their students into leaders. At the end of an undergraduate degree, the AAC expects that students achieve “Student Success”.

Student success relies on a quality experience within the classroom and broader learning environment, facilitated by well-trained leaders. To this end, students must feel supported by faculty, staff and peers in educational and social pursuits. Instructors must be exposed to, and encouraged to use, innovative techniques and technologies while students must be given opportunities to apply what they learn inside the classroom to experiential endeavors, and vice-versa. Finally, strong and meaningful learning outcomes, including core transferable technical and ‘soft’ competencies, should be established to guide, assess and review. These outcomes can draw from already existing best practices that capture engagement, evolution of critical language and analysis skills, and an expected amalgamation of program-specific skill development.

We aim to hold all of our faculties to similarly high standards, while recognizing the inherent differences that exist between them. This report both qualitatively and quantitatively compares each faculty and program’s ability to deliver unique and wide-ranging learning opportunities, and addresses the strengths and weaknesses of each faculty. This knowledge can be used in efforts to diminish the divide between faculties and programs so that all undergraduate programs deliver the same variety of high-quality educational experiences.

GLOSSARY OF COURSE TYPE

Lecture: A traditional lecture course is a course in which students are primarily seated and listening to an oral presentation, usually by a professor or other instructor.

Lab Component: A laboratory component course allows students the opportunity to learn within a laboratory environment. This usually means students are interacting with scientific and/or technological equipment in order to investigate a class concept.

Problem-based learning: A form of active learning, PBL is a type of learning in which problems and problem-solving guide student education.

Seminar: Seminars are characterized by small class sizes and continued discussion on a particular course topic. Each student is encouraged to participate in the discussion. Seminars can also be used for students to present their findings from a thesis or research project.

Independent Study: This course type focuses on self-directed learning and usually requires a student and Professor to agree upon a topic of research for the student to undertake. The student then completes their task individually, with guidance from the Professor or Faculty.

Thesis: Courses where students are required to complete a major paper in fulfillment of their program curriculum. These courses almost always occur in the final year of the undergraduate program, and involve the student constructing a paper based upon research findings. For the purpose of this report, courses based upon a major research project can also be considered a type of Thesis.

Experiential Education: Experiential Education is a broad term that, for the purpose of this report, encompasses experiential learning, co-op programs and field work. When programs are assessed for their ability to implement experiential education, the amount of opportunities for students to receive direct experience in their field of study is analyzed. These can take the form of internships, field trips, or other methods that program administration have put in place within courses or the program as a whole.

Inquiry: A course that focuses on questions to motivate student interest and learning. Courses generally emphasize self-directed learning and exploration of thematic material.

Active: A course in which students are moving and physically interacting with their course material; for example, musical performance, painting and field trips.

Online: A course that is either entirely presented in an online format, or students are required to go online to satisfy an aspect of the course. Some programs have online resources for students and although this does not satisfy the definition of an online course, it is documented in the Comments section.

A Note on Course Frequencies

It is important to note that certain courses use multiple course types, such as a course that blends lectures with online modules. For a course such as this, the course would count under both Traditional lecture and Online. As a result, if the frequency of each course type is added in a program, the sum is often higher than the number of courses available in the program.

Therefore, for the purpose of compiling data for pie charts, the sum of all course types is used rather than the number of courses offered. This ensures that the percentage of each course type in a program is compared accurately to the total number of course types present, rather than courses.

DeGROOTE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Submitted by:

Matthew Cavdar

Degroote Commerce Society

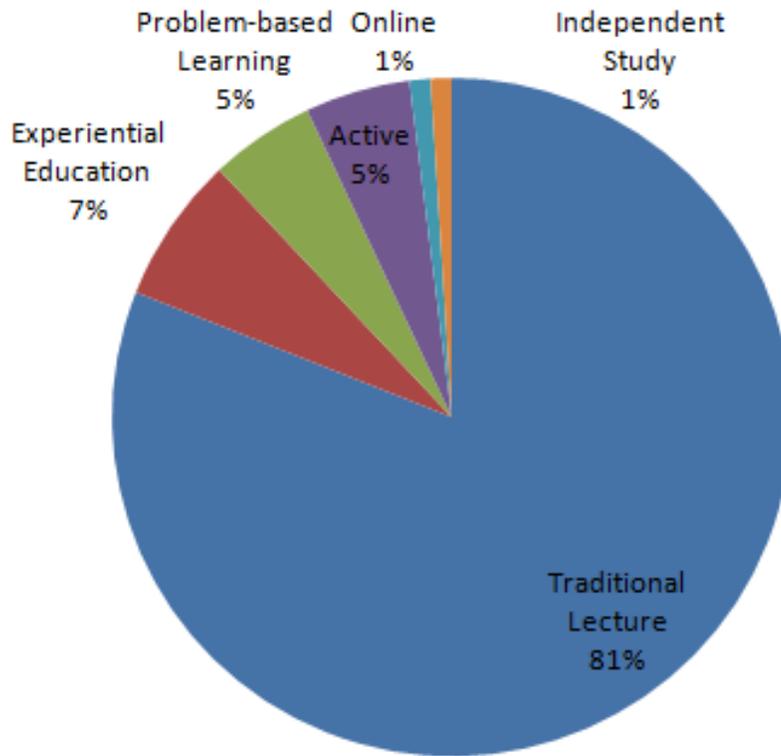
DeGroote is McMaster's school of business and commerce. It aims to prepare students to be business leaders, and its undergraduate commerce courses are classified according to a number of topics: accounting, finance, human resources, information systems, marketing, and operations management.

Students graduate from their four-year program with either a B. Com or Honours B Com. Previously, the curriculum for students at DeGroote was designed in such a way that students were not given access to many commerce courses until their second year of studies. As a result of students receiving this structure unenthusiastically the school is currently undergoing a redesign to ensure that students will be able to establish themselves as commerce students from the moment they enter McMaster.

Many students believe this constitutes a positive change within the faculty. Once students enter their third year they begin to focus on a specific area of business, and are also presented with many experiential opportunities. This is also the year in which students can apply for exchange or for internships that range from 4-16 months. Once in fourth year, students focus on policy and a final capstone project.

COURSE DIVERSITY

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	81%
Experiential Education	7%
Problem-based Learning	5%
Active	5%
Online	1%
Independent Study	1%
Seminar	0%
Inquiry	0%
Thesis	0%
Lab Component	0%



McMaster Undergraduate Course Calendar, 2013-2014

Issue: Student Retention

There is a 14% drop in student retention from Level II to Level III. This number is particularly concerning because Level II is when students are given more options of business courses and topics.

Issue: First Year Courses

The AAC is highly supportive of the faculty’s shifting of Commerce 2AA3 (Financial Accounting) and 2BA3 (Organizational Behavior) to first year courses, as the lack of business courses in Level I presents a significant concern to commerce students. Students expect to be exposed to their discipline as soon as possible upon entering university, and should not be expected to fill a large majority of their first-year courses with non-explicitly related courses. Furthermore, students have expressed difficulty identifying with the business school until their second year, and have conveyed unrealistic expectations of what future years would entail after more than 1 year into their program.

Issue: Class Sizes

Though not isolated to DeGroote, many foundational classes are simply too large. Students have a hard time staying engaged with a class size of over 200 students. While teaching and learning quality may not explicitly depend on class size, class size does contribute to student success in the classroom. Several higher-education studies have shown that class size negatively correlates with student satisfaction, ratings of instructor effectiveness, grade performance, and learning outcomes. Possible explanations for this data might include limited individual student-instructor interaction, increased potential for classroom disruption/limited participation, or lower attendance. Another likely reason for negative student outcomes is that larger classes do not easily lend themselves to innovations in pedagogy, such as experiential or peer-based learning¹.

The AAC is supportive of blended learning as a means to improve quality of education, and dedicate resources into small classrooms that encourage more intimate student-instructor interaction. Secondly, the hiring of teaching-stream faculty members constitutes a high-quality, cost-effective investment for the faculty.

Issue: Teaching & Learning Pedagogy

The AAC is concerned that 81% of courses offered in the faculty of business are traditional lecture-based courses, which represents a current lack of opportunities for students to engage in experiential learning or problem-based learning. CITE As an example, students do not experience a case-based class until their 3rd year Marketing course.

A new course within the Faculty of Business is being offered in second semester of this fiscal school year exclusively to third year students teaching them how to excel in case competitions. The success and positive feedback from students about this will govern a push to develop more courses that allow students to learn in this non-traditional manner.

The AAC recommends that faculty leadership reaffirm a commitment to intentionally and consistently incorporating high-impact experiences into all undergraduate students' educational experiences.

Issue: Student Differentiation

When students graduate from DeGroote their degree reads "B. Comm." with no specialization sub-heading. DeGroote should provide more outlets for students to differentiate themselves based on skill-set. For example, the MARS Apprentice competition (Marketing, Advertising, Retail and Sales) serves as a business credit, as well as an opportunistic learning experience. Students remarked that they have gained more knowledge during the Apprentice competition over any other course they have taken during their undergraduate career.

Unfortunately, programs like MARS are limited to a small number of participants and are mainly found only in the marketing or strategy departments. While not all areas of business intrinsically lend themselves to the experiential learning blueprint, such as accounting, there are things that can be done that can help students be more engaged in their learning. A positive move that the MARS Apprentice competition does is award students with credit; which encourages students to work harder, thus learning more in the process.

The AAC recommends that DeGroote form a strategy for providing students with for-credit experiences in the broader learning environment, including internships, experiential opportunities and case competitions.

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING

Submitted by:

Benjamin Kinsella

McMaster Engineering Society

McMaster's Faculty of Engineering provides three undergraduate degree options; Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Applied Science and Bachelor of Technology. Each of these options emphasizes innovative research in an effort to support the development of globally minded engineers. Despite this overarching goal, each degree program contains their own unique streams and specializations. As a whole they ensure that McMaster Engineering can support students of all interests and learning styles.

The faculty's main successes lie in its commitment to two key pillars for their students' experience; experiential learning and sustainability. For experiential learning, the faculty has announced the Engineering Centre for Experiential Learning (ExCEL), and has adopted the learning Portfolio for two of its flagship add-on programs; Management and Society. The faculty's Experiential Learning Task Force also exists to educate faculty members on experiential learning theories and practices.

Regarding sustainability, the faculty's Society add-on program provides a deeper understanding about how future engineering practice will influence and impact both local and global communities. The SUSTAIN courses, ex: SUSTAIN 2A03, are open to all students and are run through the faculty. The faculty's Task Force on Sustainability in Engineering Education also aims to better incorporate the concepts of sustainability into the curriculum, and have developed core sustainability competencies with the intent that graduates have achieved these at a significant level of learning.

COURSE DIVERSITY

CHEMICAL ENGINEERING

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	68%
Problem-based Learning	13%
Lab Component	11%
Experiential Education	4%
Independent Study	2%
Seminar	2%
Thesis	0%
Inquiry	0%

COMPUTING AND SOFTWARE

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	65%
Lab Component	16%
Problem-based Learning	7%
Independent Study	6%
Seminar	4%
Experiential Education	2%
Thesis	0%
Inquiry	0%

CIVIL ENGINEERING

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	59%
Lab Component	33%
Experiential Education	4%
Seminar	2%
Independent Study	2%
Thesis	0%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Inquiry	0%

ELECTRICAL & COMPUTER ENGINEERING

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	59%
Lab Component	33%
Experiential Education	4%
Seminar	2%
Independent Study	2%
Thesis	0%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Inquiry	0%

MATERIALS SCIENCE & ENGINEERING

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	66%
Lab Component	18%
Problem-based Learning	5%
Experiential Education	5%
Seminar	3%
Thesis	3%
Independent Study	0%
Inquiry	0%
Active	0%
Online	0%

ENGINEERING & MANAGEMENT

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	80%
Problem-based Learning	20%
Lab Component	0%
Seminar	0%
Independent Study	0%
Thesis	0%
Experiential Education	0%
Inquiry	0%
Active	0%
Online	0%

ENGINEERING (GENERAL)

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	47%
Lab Component	24%
Experiential Education	15%
Problem-based Learning	7%
Seminar	5%
Online	2%
Independent Study	0%
Inquiry	0%

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

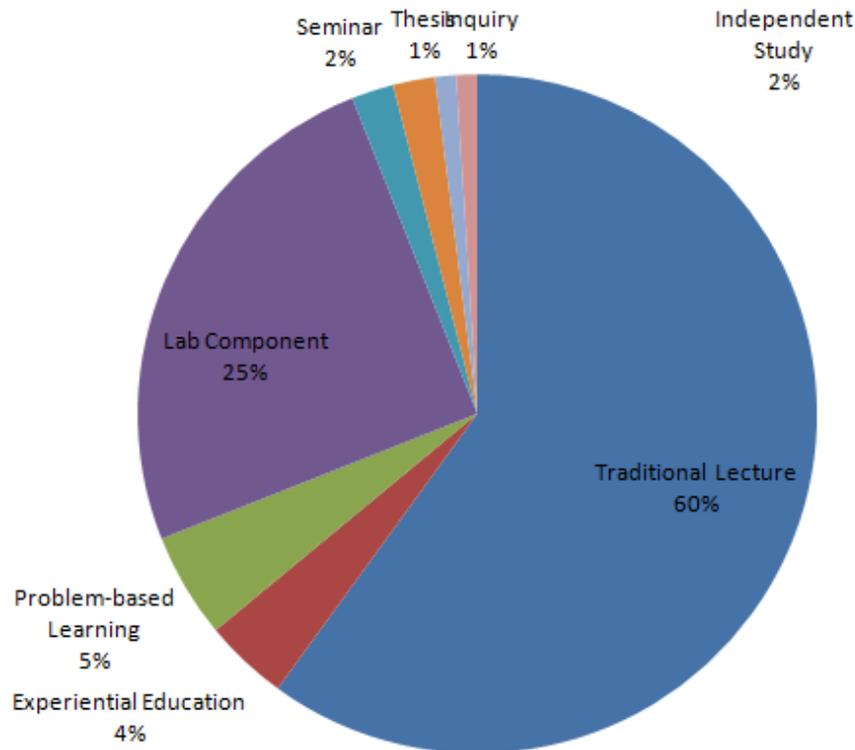
Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	74%
Lab Component	20%
Experiential Education	4%
Thesis	2%
Independent Study	0%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Seminar	0%
Inquiry	0%

ENGINEERING PHYSICS

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	62%
Lab Component	25%
Experiential Education	5%
Independent Study	2%
Active	2%
Problem-based Learning	2%
Online	2%
Seminar	0%

ENGINEERING & SOCIETY

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	60%
Inquiry	30%
Seminar	10%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Independent Study	0%
Thesis	0%
Experiential Education	0%
Lab Component	0%



McMaster Undergraduate Course Calendar, 2013-2014

Issue: Degree Flexibility

One of McMaster Engineering's strengths is its broad range of comprehensive combinations of programs, streams, and specializations to complement a range of student interests. That being said, the Faculty should look into the feasibility of creating more options for students, such as pairing together Engineering and Law or Engineering and Medicine. If realized, these combinations would allow students to connect their other interests with an engineering degree, and also see the value and practicality of an engineering education through the lens of other disciplines. In addition, by diversifying the range of engineering options to non-traditional pairings, McMaster Engineering graduates can leave their program with distinguishable experience that will help them in achieving a future career.

The Engineering program provides few opportunities for students to take courses outside the program, beyond taking a small number of complimentary electives. There is one add-on program, Society, within the faculty which focuses on how future engineering practice will influence and impact both local and global communities. The Society program allows students the opportunity to minor in a discipline of their choice outside engineering. However, access to these courses is minimal and many courses restrict access by faculty, leaving engineering students without the necessary permissions.

Issue: Student Retention

In the Faculty of Engineering, retention from Level I to Level II decreased by 12.5% for the 2012 – 2013 fiscal academic year. This number is concerning, and as a result the Engineering 1 Office recently created a new set of complex algorithms to detect students at risk of failing their engineering program. This initiative has decrease the attrition rate by half within the faculty. Although student retention is still acknowledged as a concern for student success within the Faculty of Engineering, the AAC is highly supportive of the work done to address this situation.

Issue: The Broader Learning Environment

In order to address the media perception of the ‘lack of value’ in university degrees, Ontario universities have recently focused on fostering the broader learning environment by acknowledging the learning students do outside of traditional classrooms while at university. McMaster’s Faculty of Engineering has recently recognized the value of the faculty’s dominant engineering student society by creating the Engineering Centre for Experiential Learning (ExCEL). However, more could be done to show that the Faculty endorses these out-of-classroom learning experiences. For example, the University of Waterloo’s WatPD is an engineering-specific professional development and leadership program, a program such as this would greatly benefit McMaster’s Engineering students.

Issue: Teaching Assistants

Similar to other faculties and programs at McMaster University, many courses within the Faculty of Engineering are highly dependent on teaching assistants for quality student learning. However, the only faculty-wide training that is specified for teaching assistants is a brief orientation to provides TAs with information to help them perform their duties, and any required health and safety training.

Engineering students have noticed a divide between graduate and undergraduate teaching assistants, particularly in terms of classroom leadership and commitment to student success. A teaching assistantship is often required for graduate students to fulfill their program’s requirements, resulting in a higher proportion of uninterested or unqualified teaching assistants in the laboratory or tutorial. The AAC recommends an extended and holistic TA training program in the faculty, focused on inspiring interest and passion in teaching, as well as developing classroom leadership skills.

FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Submitted by:

Kai Chen

Bachelor of Health Sciences Society

The Faculty of Health Sciences is McMaster's smallest faculty, and focuses specifically on the fields of health and medical sciences. Central to the Bachelor of Health Sciences Program is the idea of problem-based learning and the development of skill sets that will enable students to pursue life-long learning. This unique environment within Health Sciences allows students to develop transferable skills that are highly valued in a post-undergraduate setting. On the other hand, this environment also poses nontraditional challenges to student learning and student success. The program's main strengths lie in its wide diversity of course types, with only 40% of courses being considered traditional lecture, although many of these courses include an experiential or unique teaching style. With 20% of courses also being considered either inquiry or problem-based learning, students within the Faculty of Health Sciences tend to learn from a student-centered model, and are consistently guided by highly qualified and knowledgeable professors.

COURSE DIVERSITY

BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES SPECIALIZATION

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	36%
Experiential Education	16%
Problem-based Learning	12%
Inquiry	12%
Independent Study	4%
Thesis	4%
Lab Component	4%
Seminar	4%

HONOURS HEALTH SCIENCES

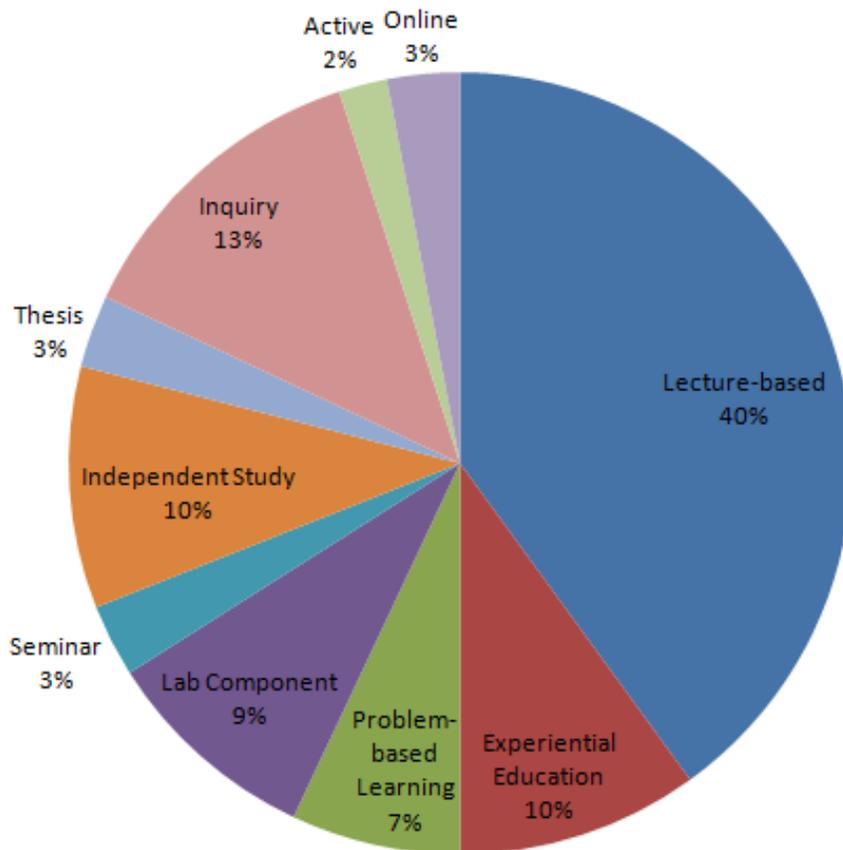
Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	46%
Lab Component	12%
Independent Study	12%
Inquiry	12%
Problem-based Learning	5%
Experiential Education	5%
Active	3%
Online	3%

GLOBAL HEALTH SPECIALIZATION

CHILD CARE SPECIALIZATION

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	42%
Inquiry	16%
Independent Study	11%
Experiential Education	11%
Lab Component	5%
Thesis	5%
Problem-based Learning	5%
Seminar	5%

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	26%
Experiential Education	22%
Inquiry	11%
Independent Study	11%
Lab Component	6%
Thesis	6%
Problem-based Learning	6%
Online	6%



McMaster Undergraduate Course Calendar, 2013-2014

Issue: Outcomes over Process Focus

After graduating from the Health Sciences program, many students pursue professional degrees and graduate degrees, which may entail competitive academic standards for admission. As a result, a high focus on GPA permeates within the undergraduate culture. There is an additional student-wide perception that it is easier to attain a high-grade average in some courses than others - leading some students to strategically plan their undergraduate experience from a GPA standpoint instead of an interest and challenge standpoint. This may have significant impact on student success past undergraduate study, and may contribute to a student feeling dissatisfied about their education, despite achieving graduate school acceptance.

To address these concerns, the BHSS encourages faculty and students to work together to dispel false perceptions and adjust incentives to encourage genuine and interest-motivated pursuit of education.

Issue: Self-Directed Learning

A high number of the faculty's courses involve inquiry, problem-based and experiential learning. This self-directed learning can often represent a change of pace for incoming undergraduate students, but also pose unique challenges to students who are accustomed to a more passive learning environment. As a result, students may not initially maximize their engagement in the open-ended environment of BHSc courses. There are, however, many students who do take increasing advantage of this unique learning experience as they progress through their undergraduate education.

Additionally, conflicts and issues of accountability arise during group work, which represents a considerable concern for students given a high amount of student learning is conducted in a group-based setting. Currently, there are mechanisms, such as peer evaluation and peer tutoring, integrated within courses that focus on group work to address these issues. Students should be consistently encouraged by peers and faculty to utilize these mechanisms in their courses. Process is valued as much as progress and product in many BHSc courses, and therefore in-course incentives may be adjusted to reflect a focus on aspects of group process.

Issue: Faculty-Specific Courses

Some core BHSc courses depend upon the valuable contributions from key faculty members. This poses a sustainability concern, in particular when there is turnover of faculty members. In addition, during transitions drastic changes to course structure may conflict with student expectations, specifically when these expectations are often spread by word-of-mouth and ingrained in student perceptions prior to students enrolling in the course. Expectations should be addressed explicitly from the perspectives of course administrators, students, and professors during periods of transition and course development. Student and faculty feedback should be sought and made transparent to all relevant parties.

SCHOOL OF NURSING

Submitted by:

Chris Wituik

McMaster University Nursing Students Society

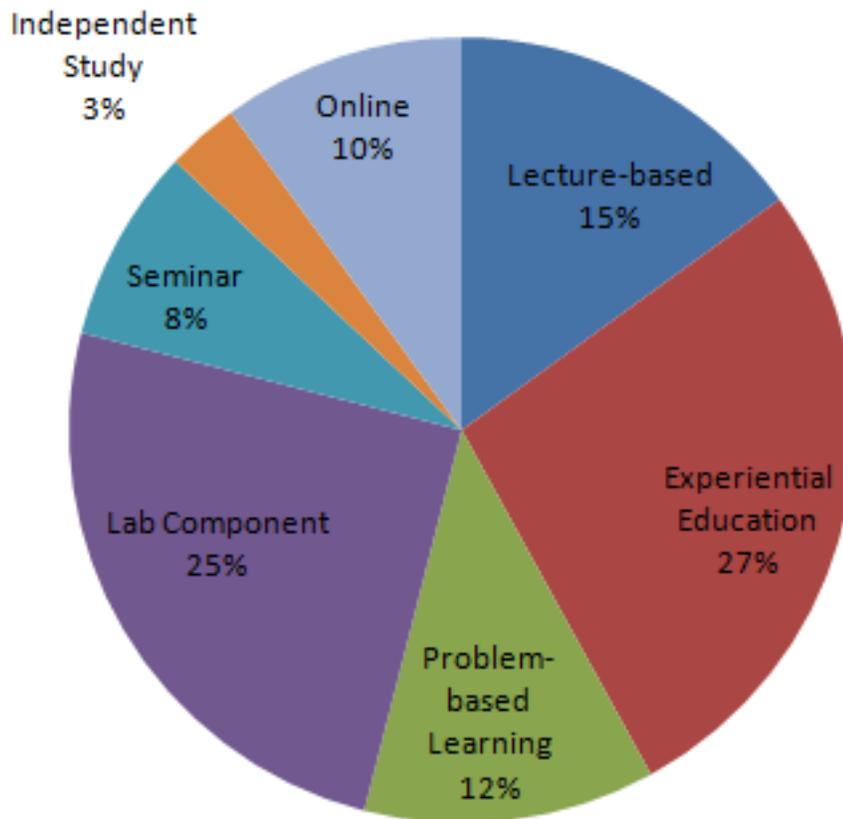
McMaster's Nursing Program allows students from high school and other backgrounds to apply to the basic stream. Students who have completed two or more years of undergraduate study are eligible to apply to the accelerated stream. Students admitted into either of these three streams study at three sites, McMaster University's campus, Mohawk, and Conestoga under the same curriculum.

McMaster's Nursing program is known for its self-directed and problem-based learning, as demonstrated in the course type frequency pie chart below. One of the program's notable successes is its experiential learning; students can attend Canadian Nursing Students Association conferences as well as complete a senior clinical rotation in a specialty setting such as the ICU or ER. Students may also embark on a global health placement working in resource-limited areas around the world.

Throughout their program, students can expect a high level of education and personal growth and upon passing the registration exam with the College of Nurses of Ontario, a fulfilling career as a registered nurse (RN). Students are also eligible to continue their studies and professional development in a wide variety of areas.

COURSE DIVERSITY

Course Type	Frequency
Experiential Education	27%
Lab Component	25
Traditional Lecture	15
Problem-based Learning	12
Online	10
Seminar	8
Independent Study	3
Thesis	0



McMaster Undergraduate Course Calendar, 2013-2014

Issue: Course Evaluation

Within the Nursing program, there seems to be general agreement that the evaluation methods used in problem-based learning (PBL) classes is, at times, too subjective. The evaluation lacks standardization and varies between tutors, and this can result in different grading schemes for different students. Rubrics for evaluating scholarly papers have the potential to be unclear and also have complex wording, which leaves too much to interpretation.

There have also been perceived discrepancies between what students learn and what students are expected to do in their PBL classes. This may be related to a push for hiring part-time faculty, leading to disregard for, or lack of understanding of, the longitudinal learning goals of the program and differences in tutors' teaching styles. As a result, some students have experienced issues in meeting certain ends-in-view of the program.

Some students have additionally expressed concern over their readiness to continue engaging in PBL in their next level due to the relative lack of expectations in their current PBL courses. Students consider a review of teaching expectations and evaluation methods by faculty important in order to solve this issue.

Issue: Professional Practice Placements

Students have remarked that the setting of their clinical placement does not contribute towards their learning goals. Naturally, clinical opportunities are limited by the clinical agencies accepting students, but an awareness of how this affects students is important. For example, students have reported a difference in the experience between a morning clinical placement setting to those in the afternoon. This was simply due to a lack of opportunities available during this time of the day. A solution should include encouraging self-directed learning plans and advocating for more opportunities for students.

Issue: Differences in Study Sites

At the McMaster site for students enrolled in the accelerated stream, some students find themselves overwhelmed with the work due to the accelerated nature of the program. This occurs because a typically four-year program is compacted into only 20 months. These students have also expressed feelings of segregation from the rest of the McMaster-Mohawk-Conestoga BScN program. At the Conestoga site, students note a lack of electives in the first year of the basic stream. These students also feel as though they are segregated from the McMaster and Mohawk community.

It should also be noted that a disparity exists in regard to CRNE passing rates between sites with the Mohawk Site trailing behind. Therefore, it is clear that a lack of inclusivity and consistency between and across campuses is a notable concern within McMaster's Nursing program.

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Submitted by:

Mathew Towers

McMaster Humanities Society

McMaster's Faculty of Humanities remains highly important and central to the university's mission to provide a comprehensive and humanistic education to students. The faculty contains a diverse range of disciplines, including, but not limited to the languages, history, the arts and philosophy, and students typically choose to major in one or two of these disciplines in second year and beyond. In addition, many non-Humanities students engage in Humanities courses to gain an appreciation for the humanistic perspective on a wide range of issues.

In recent years, faculties of arts and humanities have become increasingly under threat across Canada; this is in large part to the widespread media perception of skill gaps and the notion that the arts degree is irrelevant in practice. McMaster students from within and beyond the faculty reject this view as an education in the arts equips students with a wide array of important skills, such as critical analysis, communication, creative writing and unique perspectives on the world. However, students recognize that the Faculty of Humanities faces a variety of unique challenges to student success and is positioned to address these.

Among these challenges is the variety of teaching & learning pedagogies used in classrooms, the lack of a student cohesion in first year and a largely undefined educational and career direction for many students. While recognizing these obstacles to student success, it is also important to acknowledge that professors are often extremely qualified in their field, and lectures involve interesting and thought-provoking content, in which students are ready to engage and discuss. Humanities students also welcome the addition of the newly-formed Humanities Targeted Learning & Experiential Education Centre (HTLC), with the mission of assisting students in making professional development and career decisions and providing greater access to experiential learning opportunities.

COURSE DIVERSITY

STUDIO ART

Course Type	Frequency
Active	66%
Traditional Lecture	18%
Independent Study	5%
Seminar	5%
Problem-based Learning	3%
Thesis	3%
Lab Component	0%
Inquiry	0%

COMMUNICATION STUDIES & MULTIMEDIA

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	78%
Lab Component	9%
Seminar	4%
Problem-based Learning	3%
Independent Study	3%
Thesis	1%
Experiential Education	1%
Inquiry	1%

ART HISTORY

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	65%
Seminar	29%
Thesis	3%
Inquiry	3%
Independent Study	0%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Experiential Education	0%
Lab Component	0%

MUSIC & MUSIC COGNITION

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	43%
Active	40%
Lab Component	125
Independent Study	4%
Thesis	1%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Experiential Education	0%
Inquiry	0%

THEATRE & FILM STUDIES

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	56%
Active	25%
Seminar	11%
Experiential Education	8%
Independent Study	0%
Thesis	0%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Inquiry	0%

ENGLISH & CULTURAL STUDIES

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	55%
Seminar	43%
Independent Study	1%
Inquiry	1%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Thesis	0%
Experiential Education	0%
Lab Component	0%

CLASSICS

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	73%
Seminar	15%
Independent Study	5%
Lab Component	5%
Experiential Education	2%
Thesis	0%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Inquiry	0%

FRENCH

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	71%
Seminar	23%
Online	4%
Independent Study	2%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Thesis	0%
Experiential Education	0%
Inquiry	0%

HISTORY

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	57%
Seminar	38%
Inquiry	2%
Independent Study	2%
Experiential Education	1%
Thesis	0%
Lab Component	0%
Problem-based Learning	0%

PEACE STUDIES

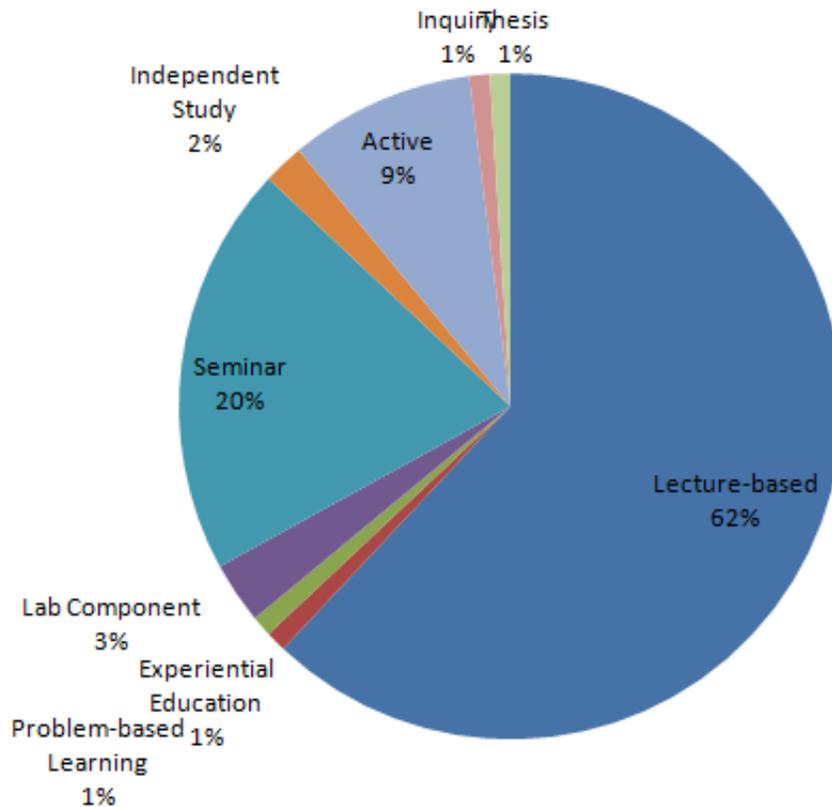
Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	53%
Seminar	37%
Problem-based Learning	2%
Independent Study	2%
Inquiry	2%
Active	2%
Experiential Education	2%
Thesis	0%

LINGUISTICS & LANGUAGES

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	79%
Seminar	11%
Lab component	4%
Experiential Education	2%
Independent Study	2%
Thesis	1%
Problem-based Learning	1%
Inquiry	0%

PHILOSOPHY

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	74%
Seminar	22%
Independent Study	4%
Lab component	0%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Thesis	0%
Experiential Education	0%
Inquiry	0%



McMaster Undergraduate Course Calendar, 2013-2014

Issue: Diversity of Teaching & Learning Pedagogy

As represented by the Faculty of Humanities Course Type Frequency pie chart above, an extremely high frequency of courses, 91% specifically, fall under the lecture, seminar or active category. Moreover, Studio Art, Music, and Theatre and Film Studies constitute the overwhelming majority of active courses, with over 98% of the Faculty’s active courses contained in those three disciplines (McMaster Undergraduate Course Calendar, 2013-2014). This leaves the remaining programs to generally provide lecture-based and seminar-based learning, with little opportunity for students to learn through other avenues.

Learning technologies that aim to foster student interaction in large classes, such as iClickers could be used more to encourage participation. This effect is less apparent in courses that contain tutorials, but is still a significant concern for the Faculty’s ability to connect with students. The AAC recommends that faculty leadership sets targets to increase the diversity of course pedagogies through greater incorporation of experiential education, inquiry, and problem-based learning.

Issue: Educational & Career Direction

Many students enter the Faculty of Humanities unsure of what they plan to do after they receive their undergraduate degree, typically using their first year to experiment in a wide variety of courses before selecting a major or minor in their second year and following years. While the current rhetoric of 'jobless arts grads' may not be grounded in reality, students in the Faculty of Humanities are under this impression, and many Humanities students end up switching faculties due to the sense that there is a lack of job opportunities in their field.

Students believe that guidance and direction for a future career can be immediately addressed during their first year. The AAC approves of the not-for-credit course Humanities 1AA0, which aims to provide students in Level I with a high-level introduction into upper-year majors and programs. This course could grow to incorporate an orientation into career pathways and what types of education are required for students to attain those careers.

Secondly, departments should take greater advantage of the HTLC through purposeful integration of experiential education courses to achieve degree learning outcomes.. Experiential education not only teaches students valuable knowledge and skills, but these opportunities also serve as career exploration tools for many students.

The AAC recommends that each department work to provide students with access to for-credit experiential courses that are aligned with the degree outcomes in that department. The faculty should actively seek out partnerships wherever possible: public organizations and government offices, small and large businesses, international opportunities, not-for-profits, and other community-based initiatives. Depending on the departmental mission and goals, each department should aim to establish a wide repertoire of partnerships that are promoted to students.

Issue: Sense of Community

Students highly believe in the importance of building community from first year. Often times, students feel lost in first year, partially due to overwhelmingly large classes and little opportunity to have direct, meaningful interaction with peers and professors. Unfortunately, these are all challenges that first year Humanities students face, and as such, the first year course structure requires a significant change. As a solution at the recommendation of the AAC, the faculty should introduce 'themed clusters' in which all first-year Humanities students enroll. Carleton University's ArtsOne program also uses a similar cluster-based approach, which has been met with high praise from students and faculty members.

Students are strongly in favour of the cluster-based approach for numerous reasons. First, small-class clusters allow students to make stronger connections to each other in first year as they will be interacting and working together in a common space, and share common goals. Secondly, clusters allow students to focus on a certain 'area' of the humanities, based on personal interest. In designing the curriculum for these courses, one must take special care to tie together learning themes from existing first-year courses, yet also use the clusters to teach students that an education in the humanities has feasible application to life outside the classroom. Students feel that this can be done in a way that does not compromise traditional learning outcomes.

FACULTY OF SCIENCE

Submitted by:

Michael Birch

McMaster Science Society

McMaster's Faculty of Science includes an expansive list of degree programs; Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences, Biology, Chemistry and Chemical Biology, Kinesiology, Life Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics, Medical Physics and Applied Radiation Sciences and Physics and Astronomy. Students within the Faculty of Science are therefore exposed to extreme variations in education, and so the challenges they face are similarly unique.

Students within the Faculty of Science benefit from approximately 20% of their courses including a lab component, as well as many of their traditional lecture courses including an iClicker to test student understanding. Students within the faculty are also subject to a high number of research and experiential learning placements, although a concern is that this number is not high enough to satisfy those that are applying.

COURSE DIVERSITY

BIOCHEMISTRY & BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	53%
Lab Component	18%
Seminar	11%
Inquiry	5%
Indendent Study	5%
Thesis	5%
Problem-based Learning	3%
Experiential Education	0%

BIOLOGY

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	61%
Lab Component	25%
Active	6%
Seminar	4%
Thesis	3%
Independent Study	1%
Experiential Education	0%
Inquiry	0%

LIFE SCIENCES

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	29%
Seminar	26%
Experiential Education	11%
Active	11%
Inquiry	8%
Lab Component	6%
Independent Study	6%
Thesis	3%

CHEMISTRY AND CHEMICAL BIOLOGY

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	68%
Lab Component	22%
Inquiry	7%
Thesis	2%
Seminar	1%
Independent Study	0%
Experiential Education	0%
Problem-based Learning	0%

LIFE SCIENCES

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	29%
Seminar	26%
Experiential Education	11%
Active	11%
Inquiry	8%
Lab Component	6%
Independent Study	6%
Thesis	3%

CHEMISTRY AND CHEMICAL BIOLOGY

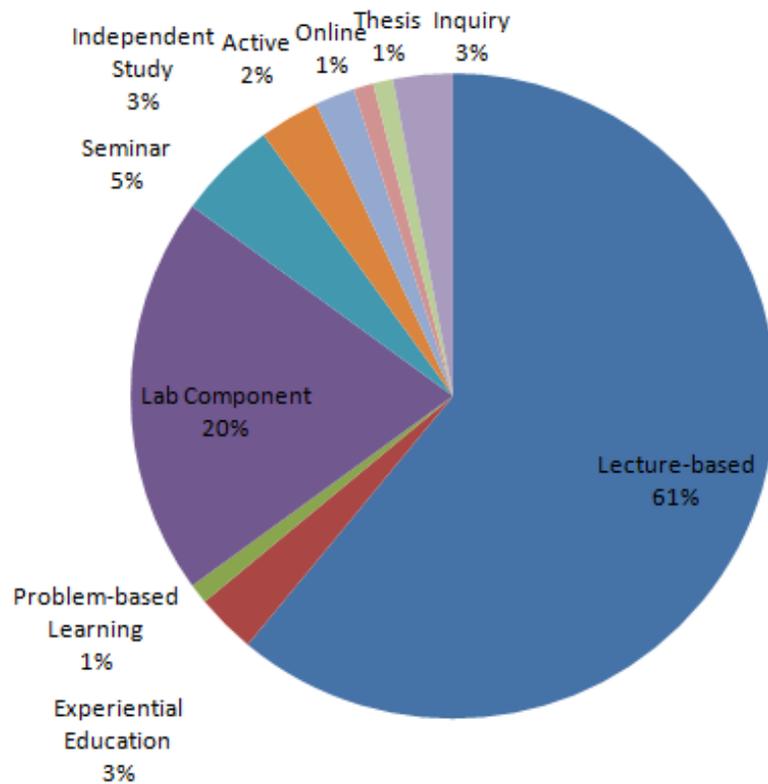
Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	68%
Lab Component	22%
Inquiry	7%
Thesis	2%
Seminar	1%
Independent Study	0%
Experiential Education	0%
Problem-based Learning	0%

MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	87%
Lab Component	6%
Experiential Education	4%
Inquiry	2%
Independent Study	1%
Thesis	0%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Seminar	0%
Active	0%
Online	0%

MEDICAL PHYSICS & APPLIED RADIATION

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	61%
Lab Component	26%
Independent Study	8%
Seminar	1%
Problem-based Learning	1%
Thesis	1%
Experiential Education	1%
Inquiry	1%
Active	0%
Online	0%



McMaster Undergraduate Course Calendar, 2013-2014

Issue: Student Direction

Social and economic pressures drive many students to obtain university degrees. Both the negative perception of college instilled by poorly labeled high school courses, and the view that individuals without post-secondary education will not be employed together motivate students to continue education at university. Furthermore, the limited number of career paths most high school students are exposed to leaves these students with a narrow perspective on possibilities for their own futures. In particular, a career in the field of medicine is a very popular goal for students, despite the fact that most will not be admitted to medical school.

As a result, many students entering the faculty of science have either an unrealistic post-graduate plan or simply no plan at all and feel they are content by simply being in school. This leads to most undergraduate students in the Faculty of Science following similar paths throughout their education, attempting to achieve good grades simply in an effort to keep the option of professional school open, lacking any particular interest or passion. Most students also choose an upper year specialization, although this may be done to put a focus on their degree, rather than out of genuine interest for the discipline. Many students finally graduate into the workforce with poor prospects after having either been rejected from their preferred graduate school, or still being unsure of their career path. The AAC encourages the Faculty of Science to develop engaging programs, courses and services to provide support for students lacking direction.

The Faculty's Science Career and Cooperative Education (SCCE) office recognizes this lack of direction and provides students with information and services to help them engage in their education. In addition, the SCCE is the main administrative body for matters related to experiential learning. Although most students who have used the SCCE believe it does not require a dramatic overhaul, the centre's services go largely unused by the majority of the faculty's students. There is data showing that the number of students using the SCCE is increasing and the office is making an effort to continue this trend. Work is also being done to expand the existing experiential learning opportunities as well as create new ones. The AAC supports the continued growth of this important resource for science students.

Issue: Classroom Content Delivery

As noted above in the course diversity tables and summarized in the Faculty of Science Course Type Frequency pie chart, 61% of the faculty's courses are lecture-based, with 20% of courses featuring a laboratory component. Since these forms of learning are largely led by professors and teaching assistants, the aptitude of these individuals is extremely important for student success. As a result, one of the most common concerns among science students is the quality of teaching from professors versus teaching assistants. Some professors create PowerPoint slides and then simply read off them in lecture, while others reproduce and teach the textbook verbatim. Occasionally, it appears that a professor has no desire to teach a course, and is doing so out of necessity. Similar problems to those just mentioned exist for teaching assistants. It is therefore worthy to note that this concern is not just a teaching concern, but also a blend between the quality of teachers and pedagogy used in the classroom, which may be less effective regardless of teaching skill.

The AAC recommends that faculty leadership work to improve the culture of teaching & learning through increasing appointments of teaching-stream faculty members and through rewarding departmental leaders in strong and innovative teaching practices.

Issue: Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Within the Faculty of Science, many courses teach students knowledge and skills that are beneficial towards a wide range of the faculty's programs. For instance, in mathematics and physics, while being of relatively low enrollment themselves, are subjects that provide tools which are useful in many disciplines, for example bioinformatics and biomechanics. More ubiquitous examples include many of the statistics analysis courses, that are integral towards a holistic science education. Thus, as courses continue to become more related, students should be engaged across all of their studies and these connections should be emphasized.

The current concern is that in order to facilitate interdisciplinary studies, better communication between departments is needed. Administrative procedures also require improvement to make collaboration feasible since class scheduling is currently a limiting factor in the discussion of creating courses that service many different groups. In addition, there is significant difficulty for students to take courses outside of their academic year, which inhibits them taking other courses alongside their degree.

As scientific issues become increasingly complex and intertwined, the study of topics through an interdisciplinary lens is critical to student success. The AAC recommends that leadership within the Faculty of Science openly support the creation of courses and programs that provide an interdisciplinary perspective on scientific matters. These additional courses or programs may exist between departments or faculties.

Issue: Experiential Learning

For undergraduate students at McMaster University, experiential opportunities are increasingly being seen as a way for students to maximize their university experience and add value to their degree through active learning. Despite this acknowledgement, within the Faculty of Science only 3% of courses include a practical component. Resource constraints, coupled with the large number of science students, lead to difficulties in developing in-course experiential opportunities. However, the AAC recommends that each department in the Faculty of Science work to provide students with greater access to for-credit experiential courses that are aligned with the degree outcomes in that department.

In addition, attaining research positions during the summer term is very competitive for students because of the large student body and proportionately small number of positions. Many of these positions tend to also be unadvertised, meaning that students are unaware of these opportunities. Having more of these experiential work placements available to students would allow them to test out potential careers and define their goals following their university career as well.

The AAC also recommends that the faculty actively seek out partnerships wherever possible; research institutions, public organizations and government offices, local businesses, international opportunities, not-for-profits, and other community-based initiatives. This work is already being done by the Science Career and Cooperative Education (SCCE) office in order to facilitate experiential learning placements, however increased resources to dedicate to this task and support would be useful. Moreover, given the diversity of career paths in science, each department should aim to establish a wide repertoire of partnerships, within the specific departmental mission and goals, which are publically promoted to students.

SUBSECTION A: DEPARTMENT of KINESIOLOGY

Submitted by:

Raymond Khanano

McMaster Kinesiology Society

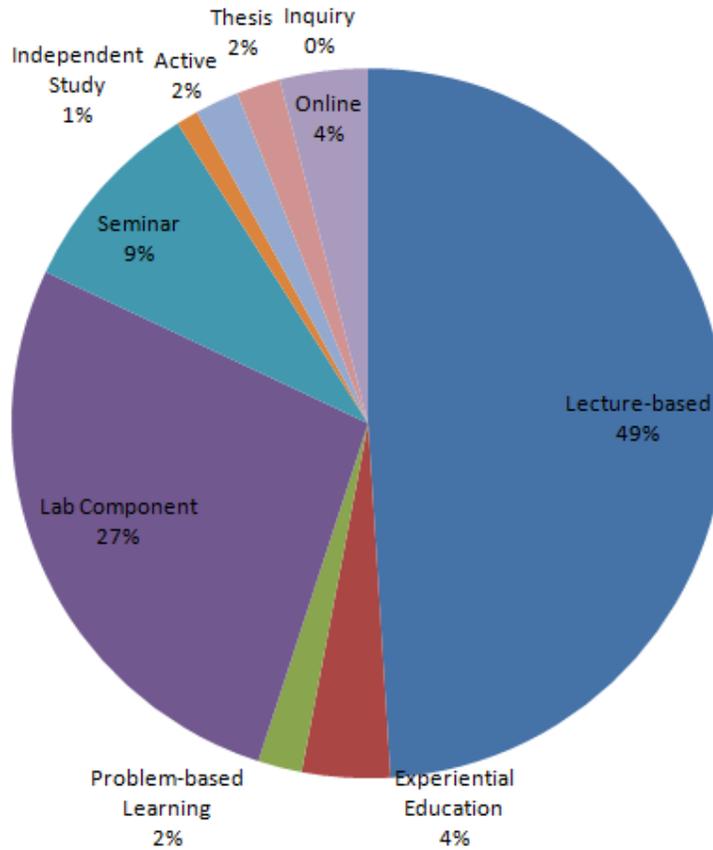
Although Kinesiology functions as a department under the Faculty of Science, and students receive many of the same benefits that students in Science receive, the department is considered a very unique portion of the student body. As a result, since a separate VP Academic represents Kinesiology the program's issues are largely raised separately from the rest of the faculty.

In Level I, students entering the program take 5 mandatory Kinesiology courses that lay the foundation for the discipline. The remaining academic course load is filled with electives from various faculties, although the most popular choices are generally from the Faculty of Science. In Level II, students take 6 mandatory Kinesiology courses and four electives.

As students progress into their upper years, courses become much more application based, and may include a professional placement. The program's main strengths are based around its experiential components and practical focus as many courses look at clinical cases, applications to health and wellness, gaining practical experience and conducting research. A student survey conducted by the Kinesiology VP Academic also reflected positively on the program, with 87% of students ranking their experience in the program as enjoyable or very enjoyable, and 87% ranking the quality of teaching as good or excellent.

KINESIOLOGY

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	49%
Lab Component	27%
Seminar	9%
Experiential Education	4%
Online	4%
Problem-based Learning	2%
Thesis	2%
Active	2%



McMaster Undergraduate Course Calendar, 2013-2014

Issue: Known Resource Issues

In the Kinesiology program, anatomy is one of the fundamental courses students are required to take as part of the discipline. The resources that are available to students for this course outside of class could be considered variable. In Anatomy, students recognizing surface features and landmarks on self or peer models (via palpation) is an excellent and very popular tool used to study the discipline. Others find the use of cadaveric models beneficial as it provides another perspective and level of understanding. In first year, students are exposed to preserved human specimens over the course of **2 semesters, with 10 lab experiences**. These resources are excellent; however they are only made available to those in first year.

In upper year courses, there is minimal access to the McMaster/Mohawk Anatomy lab. Students have expressed a general interest in having this feature being made available to them as students in Health Science programs at Mac have access to these resources outside of class. At the moment it is not a feature that is substantially affecting the curriculum; instead, it is a feature that some students would be interested in and a feature that would enhance the program more and make it more appealing to incoming students.

Issue: Diversity of Pedagogical Teaching Methods

The AAC recommends that leadership within the department of Kinesiology make a renewed commitment to using student-centered pedagogies, such as inquiry, problem-based learning and experiential education.

Issue: Lack of Co-Op

In Kinesiology at McMaster, gaining practical experiences in the field of human movement is one of the cornerstones of the curriculum. It has become a concern that there is little students can do to apply the knowledge while completing their undergraduate degree. Currently students only have the option of taking a professional placement for one semester in their fourth year, however there is a high interest for a co-op option to be implemented. This would allow more theory learned in the classroom to be put into practice, as well as contribute to more professional experiences throughout the undergraduate education of students.

SUBSECTION B: INTEGRATED SCIENCE PROGRAM

Submitted by:

Michael Birch

McMaster Science Society

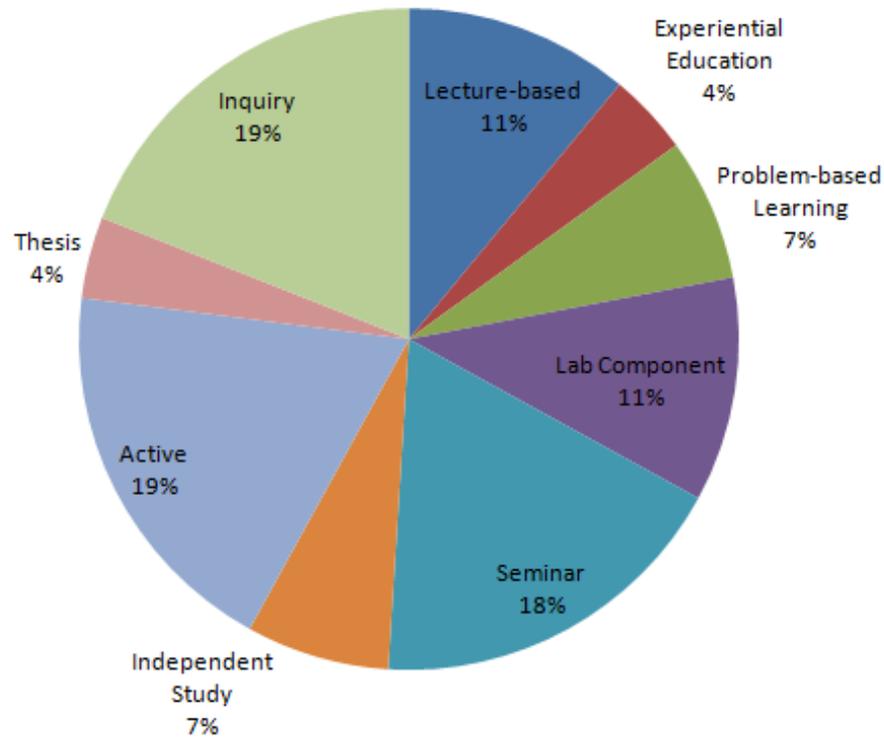
Integrated Science (iSci) is a new, limited-enrolment, four-year Honours undergraduate interdisciplinary sciences program. It is the only such program in North America and, barring the University of Leicester in the UK, the only in the world. To be considered, applicants must engage in a rigorous application process, which admits students who have a passion for the sciences, a tendency to value critical thinking skills above raw knowledge, and a general plan to pursue research or further education post-graduation.

The program's strengths are numerous and diverse. iSci has several embedded teaching faculty & administrators who perform, or have performed, research in pedagogy. Accordingly, the iSci faculty are generally interested in experimenting with non-traditional forms of teaching & learning, which can explain the balance of course types depicted below. In addition, the program has an average total faculty-to-student ratio of 1:8, which ensures that students are consistently interacting with their professors on a one-to-one basis.

Given that the program is extremely new, there is limited information on the success of the program's graduate students, although many of the first cohort of graduates have been accepted to graduate and professional studies or professional research positions.

COURSE DIVERSITY

Course Type	Frequency
Lecture-based	11%
Lab Component	11%
Problem-based Learning	7%
Seminar	18%
Independent Study	7%
Thesis	4%
Experiential Education	4%
Inquiry	19%



McMaster Undergraduate Course Calendar, 2013-2014

Issue: Challenging Adjustment Period

Many students enrolled in the Integrated Science program, especially those in first and second year, feel overwhelmed, challenged, stressed and busy. First year students often feel that the impossible is expected of them, both in terms of quality and quantity of work. In a study group conducted with several iSci students, it was noted that the earlier courses are generally skills-based and may not well prepare students for the knowledge-based upper year courses. Nonetheless, students consistently deliver above-expectations work, especially for group projects.

Current programs are in place to help alleviate stress such as peer mentoring and student-run review sessions. These programs are only delivered on the prerogative of volunteers such as the VP Academic or iSci Society, and are thus not guaranteed in perpetuity. So, although these programs have slightly diminished the feelings of stress that permeate the program, a concern is that students, especially in first or second year, are still not getting enough assistance to cope with the unique demands of the program.

Issue: Administrative Conflicts

There are some existing administrative conflicts that exist between iSci students and McMaster University. Students feel that the registrar assigns them the least desirable classrooms on campus. As well, classes and rooms vary from week-to-week, exam timetables are delivered long after the rest of the school, and classroom availabilities and assignments are sometimes changed hours or minutes before class. It is understandable that scheduling conflicts can occasionally occur with a student population as large as McMaster's, however the iSci program's repetitive issues with these scheduling conflicts cause a concern of the quality of its students' education.

Issue: Limited Electives

Due to the core courses' large unit-size, students have limited choices of electives. Only those courses required for graduation for Concentrations are guaranteed to be available, and even these are often in conflict with iSci and require skipping classes. This issue is especially present in the upper years of the program. Most, but not all minors are unattainable to iSci students as a result. Some concentrations experience issues with equivalencies as well, which have not yet been solved. This is a process that requires constant communication between iSci and individual departments. However, some professional designations are possible to attain using given elective space in the program.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Submitted by:

Tristan Paul

McMaster Social Sciences Society

McMaster's Faculty of Social Sciences includes a diverse range of three and four year undergraduate degrees. Students entering the Faculty of Social Sciences aim to attain a variety of outcomes, chiefly amongst them is the goal to explore their academic interests. The general Social Sciences I program gives first year students the freedom to take a broad range of courses from a variety of departments, and afterwards students traditionally major or specialize in a specific discipline of interest. Students may enrich their undergraduate education through Student Experience Grants (SEG's) and Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA's). These help students actively apply what they learn in the classroom by engaging with their community.

The Faculty of Social Sciences has made strides to connect student learning to real-world skills, and recognizing the value of learning in the broader community. Experiential Education in the Social Sciences is organized in the form of courses, internships, academic placements and career placements. Introduction to University Through Experiential Learning (SOC SCI 1ELO), Introduction to Career Planning Through Experiential Learning (SOC SCI 2ELO), Learning Through Experiential Learning (SOC SCI 3EL3) and Social Sciences in Action (SOC SCI 3f03) are all specific experiential education courses offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences.

COURSE DIVERSITY

ANTHROPOLOGY

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	54%
Seminar	19%
Lab Component	12%
Experiential Education	6%
Active	5%
Independent Study	4%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Thesis	0%

ECONOMICS

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	78%
Experiential Education	10%
Seminar	6%
Independent Study	4%
Inquiry	2%
Lab Component	0%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Thesis	0%

GEOGRAPHY AND EARTH SCIENCES

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	50%
Lab Component	33%
Experiential Education	5%
Seminar	4%
Active	3%
Problem-based Learning	2%
Online	1%
Independent Study	1%

HEALTH, AGING, AND SOCIETY

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	56%
Seminar	22%
Experiential Education	14%
Lab Component	2%
Independent Study	2%
Thesis	2%
Active	2%
Problem-based Learning	2%

PSYCHOLOGY, NEUROSCIENCE & BEHAVIOUR

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	55%
Lab Component	13%
Seminar	10%
Experiential Education	6%
Independent Study	6%
Online	4%
Thesis	3%
Active	2%
Inquiry	1%

LABOUR STUDIES

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	59%
Experiential Education	17%
Seminar	9%
Inquiry	6%
Independent Study	3%
Thesis	3%
Active	3%
Lab Component	0%

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	62%
Seminar	26%
Experiential Education	9%
Problem-based Learning	1%
Independent Study	1%
Thesis	1%
Lab Component	0%
Inquiry	0%

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	88%
Seminar	5%
Experiential Education	5%
Independent Study	1%
Thesis	1%
Problem-based Learning	0%
Lab Component	0%
Inquiry	0%

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Course Type	Frequency
Experiential Education	41%
Traditional Lecture	27%
Problem-based Learning	8%
Seminar	8%
Inquiry	8%
Thesis	8%
Lab Component	0%
Independent Study	0%

SOCIAL WORK

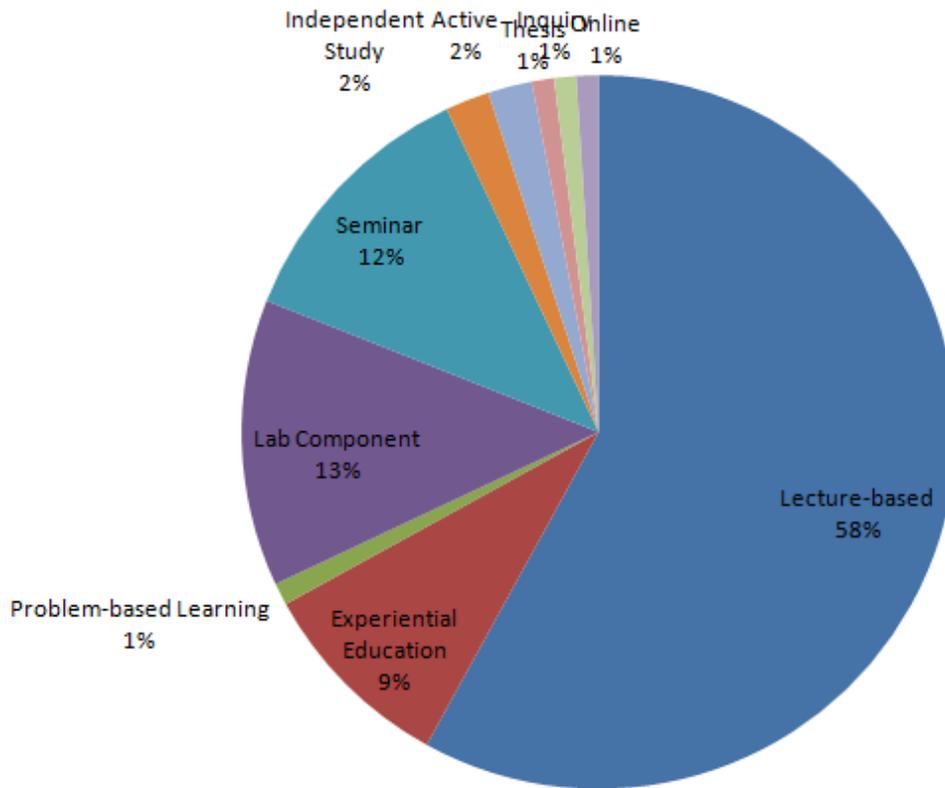
Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	64%
Experiential Education	24%
Active	6%
Seminar	6%
Independent Study	0%
Thesis	0%
Lab Component	0%
Inquiry	0%

SOCIOLOGY

Course Type	Frequency
Traditional Lecture	52%
Seminar	24%
Experiential Education	11%
Problem-based Learning	5%
Inquiry	3%
Active	3%
Lab Component	2%
Independent Study	0%

Note 1:

Experiential Education in the Social Sciences is organized in the form of courses, internships, academic placements and career placements. Introduction to University Through Experiential Learning (SOC SCI 1EL0), Introduction to Career Planning Through Experiential Learning (SOC SCI 2EL0), Learning Through Experiential Learning (SOC SCI 3EL3) and Social Sciences in Action (SOC SCI 3f03) are all specific experiential education courses offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences. Social Sciences Experiential Education also offers a multitude of internships, academic and career placements for students throughout their undergraduate study.



McMaster Undergraduate Course Calendar, 2013-2014

Issue: Interdisciplinary Learning and Pedagogy

A major concern in the Faculty of Social Sciences is that there currently exist little to no opportunities for students to explore their interests within other faculties. By pairing their degree with unconventional minors, many students can benefit from not only a distinguishable degree for the job market, but also the ability to explore their education through subjects unrelated to social sciences. In addition, based on the above Course Frequency pie chart, 58% of the Faculty of Social Sciences’ courses are lecture-based, online, inquiry, problem-based learning, thesis and independent study each represent 2% or less of the total course makeup.

This finding demonstrates that students in the faculty are unable to engage in many of the new innovative pedagogical approaches to learning that have seen success in other programs. Coupled with the fact that students in the faculty are unable to experience these courses from other faculties leads to a notable concern for social science student success.

Issue: Faculty-to-Student Ratio

The Faculty of Social Sciences typically offers many first year and second year courses with high student to faculty ratios while upper year courses usually have a significantly lower student to faculty ratio. Specifically, the Faculty of Social Sciences has the highest average faculty-to-student ratio of all the faculties at McMaster; with 1 professor for every 36 students. This is significant barrier for student and professor interaction, whether it is during lecture, office hours, or even for professor attendance at student exams. In addition, this high ratio creates an atmosphere that is not student-centered and may make students feel that they are unable to receive help in a course.

ARTS & SCIENCE PROGRAM

Submitted by:

Sam Godfrey & Suzy Flader

Society of Arts and Science Students

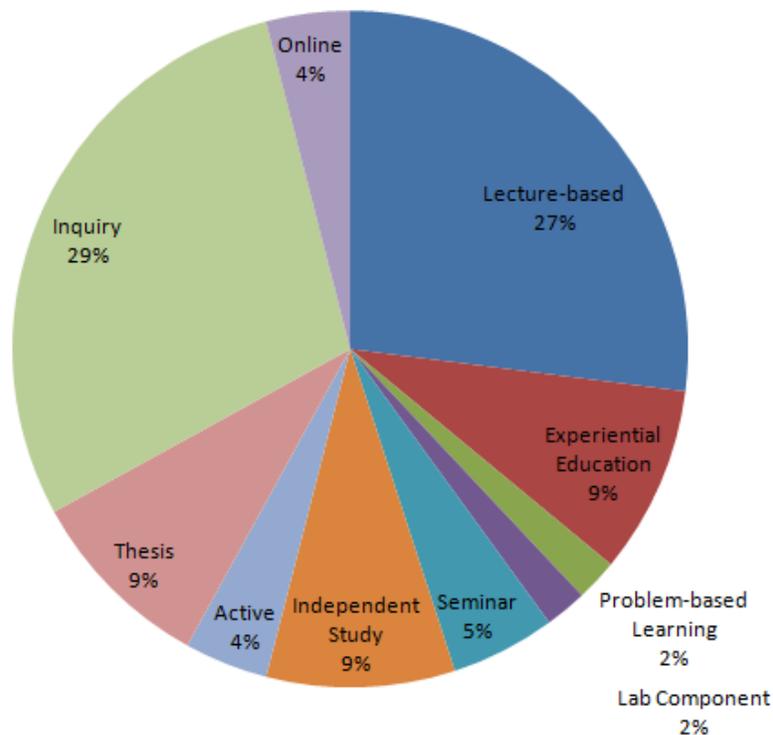
The Arts & Science program is a small, interdisciplinary program at McMaster that focuses on fostering a holistic learning environment and teaching students in both the arts and the sciences. Students receive a Bachelor of Arts and Science, but may also choose to do a Combined Honours in a specific subject, a minor in a specific subject, or both. The Arts & Science program's strengths lie particularly in its ability to create a close and supportive learning environment, which also emphasizes the broader learning environment.

Examples of experiential learning done outside of courses include the McMaster Discovery Program, the Common Reading Program and the McMaster Outdoor Orientation Student Experience (MOOSE). Another benefit of the program is its small student-to-faculty ratio, with 1 professor for every 7 student (McMaster Undergraduate Course Calendar, 2013-2014). This allows students to form extremely close bonds with their faculty, which aids them in both academic and non-academic settings.

Finally, the program benefits from the strength of its faculty and their teaching, as well as the capabilities of its incoming students, since the program has one of the most competitive application processes in Canada.

COURSE DIVERSITY

Course Type	Frequency
Inquiry	29%
Traditional Lecture	27%
Independent Study	9%
Thesis	9%
Experiential Education	9%
Seminar	5%
Active	4%
Online	4%
Lab Component	2%



McMaster Undergraduate Course Calendar, 2013-2014

Issue: Lack of Direction

Since the Arts & Science program offers students an extremely broad degree, a trend with incoming first year students is that they lack direction after university. Many undergraduates having equal strengths in both the arts and the sciences, and are equally interested in both disciplines as well. The goal of these students is to use their Arts & Science degree as a way of exploring both fields with the intent of narrowing down their career possibilities. However, as a result of the high number of mandatory Arts & Science courses, students do not actually have the opportunity to explore varying subjects. Many students end up going through their four years and still feel unguided afterwards. Around half of students combine their degree with a subject, while the other half simply opt for an Arts & Science degree.

Regardless of this decision, a high proportion of undergraduates pursue graduate schools after university, in the hopes of finding their passion or becoming more skilled for the workplace. The concern with this program is the lack of infrastructure and courses in place to help students find their ideal occupation.

Issue: Course Difficulty

In many Arts & Science courses, especially in first and second year, students are coming from widely different academic backgrounds. In courses such as Calculus, Statistics and Physics especially, some students come with a much higher level of background knowledge from high school than others. Professors teaching courses often find it difficult to ensure that students who are new to the subject are not being overwhelmed, while students who have well-versed backgrounds in the subject are being sufficiently challenged and stimulated.



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