

UNIVERSITY SECRETARIAT

S883 Ross Building
York University
4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario, Canada
M3J 1P3
☎ (416)736-5012 / FAX (416) 736-5769

TO: Professor Sandberg Anders, Chair
Faculty of Environmental Studies Council

FROM: Harriet Lewis, Secretary of the University

DATE: May 30, 2000

RE: **Approval of Joint Programs**

At its meeting of May 25, 2000, Senate approved the York-Seneca Joint Program in Urban Sustainability – York Bachelor of Environmental Studies (Specialized Honours) and Seneca Civil Engineering Technology Diploma or Resources Engineering (Environmental) Technology Diploma; the York-Sir Sandford Fleming Joint Program in Ecosystem Management – York Bachelor of Environmental Studies (Specialized Honours) and Sir Sandford Fleming Ecosystem Management Technologist Diploma; the York-Humber Joint Program in International Project Management – York Bachelor of Environmental Studies (Specialized Honours) and The Business School at Humber College Certificate in International Project Management.

Please feel free to contact me about Senate's decision or this correspondence.

cc: F. Watson, Secretary, Environmental Studies Council
G. Tourlakis, Chair, CCAS
D. Hobson, Acting University Registrar
R. Rogers

Overview and Rationale for York-CAAT Joint Programs

The Undergraduate Program in the Faculty of Environmental Studies proposes three joint programs with Ontario community colleges in the area of:

Urban Sustainability with the Centre for the Built Environment at Seneca College
Ecosystem Management with Sir Sandford Fleming College
International Project Management with The Business School at Humber College

Upon completion of the joint programs, students will receive both a BES degree from York, as well as a three-year technologist diploma (in the case of Seneca and Sir Sandford Fleming), or a post-diploma certificate (in the case of Humber). The joint programs build upon the complementary strengths of partner institutions who share similar educational perspectives, and create increased educational opportunities and a strong 'value-added' component for students, without the unnecessary duplication of programs or the additional expenditure of resources. In short, these joint programs allow the Faculty of Environmental Studies to offer applied options to students that -- because of limitations in resources and expertise -- it would not be able to offer on its own.

Structure of the Joint Programs

The York-Seneca and the York-Sir Sandford Fleming Joint Programs offer the opportunity for students to receive a university degree and a college diploma in five years, in what would otherwise be a seven-year requirement. This accelerated program can begin at either the college or the university, and is then completed at the partner institution. In the case of the York-Humber Joint Program, students begin at York and then take the post-diploma certificate in a degree-completion arrangement.

FES and York University Academic Plans and the York-CAAT Joint Programs

In the FES Academic Plan, the stated goals of the BES Program are to provide “critical, analytical, and creative capacities” on a range of environmental themes, as well as “give students specific skills for employment in the environmental area” (March 11, 1999, p. 3). The impediments to achieving these goals include: difficulties in recruiting new students, difficulties in finding opportunities for applied work, training in some skills is expensive, and faculty lack expertise in key areas (p. 3-4). The three joint programs have been expressly designed to address these impediments so that we can achieve our academic goals of linking critical skills and applied learning.

With regard to the York University Academic Plan, the three joint programs are meant to respond to “. . . a fundamental alteration of the environment in which a university has to sustain its commitments” (York Strategic Plan, May 4, 1999, p. 3). Although York must continue to emphasize the importance of the “highly valued” liberal arts education -- as the academic plan states -- it is also necessary to “provide much greater co-op and internship opportunities for students” and “increase the number of ‘applied’ certificate programs available to students in the humanities and social sciences. . . (p.11). The three joint programs reflect “the value of planning productive partnerships with Colleges, aimed at diversifying programme offerings and developing niche programs in emerging, high demand areas” (p. 16).

In the recently-completed Program Review process, the External Consultant’s Report was very supportive of the “applied edge” the proposed joint programs will provide to the BES Program, and it also states that: “One aspect which might attract higher quality students would be the enhancement of the applied or practical aspects of the program” (Jan. 28, 2000). The joint programs provide these opportunities without increasing resource demands within the faculty, and instead builds upon expertise which already exists in the Ontario education system.

Emerging Guidelines for York-CAAT Relationships

The SCARSA Sub-Committee on York-CAAT Relations is in the process of drafting principles to guide the development and assessment of York-CAAT Programs. These principles currently include:

- The initiative should provide enhanced opportunities (value-added) for students;
- The initiative should be consistent with approved mission statements and academic plans of all participating organizations;
- The initiative should respond to a clear market demand, meet a clear student need and be consistent with the University's/Faculty's enrolment plan;
- The high quality of the participating programs can be demonstrated;
- There must be complementary strengths in the college and university components, i.e., neither institution is able to offer the program on its own;
- The program must be financially viable and the costs to the university must be fully identified;
- There must be a shared educational philosophy between participating programs;
- The initiative must contribute mutual benefits to all participating institutions;
- The impact of the initiative on other University Programs must be fully assessed and the potential benefits of involving other York departments or faculties in the initiative must be fully explored;
- The particular structure of the proposed initiative (i.e., the program model) is the most effective mechanism for achieving the desired goals of both the college and the university (e.g., information gathering, exploration of interest, discussion of possibilities) and formal negotiations between institutions; and it must be clear who authorizes the movement from one stage to another and who participates in each stage;
- The integrity of the York degree (e. g., commitment to general education, multidisciplinary foundation, breadth plus depth) must not only be respected but strengthened by the initiative.

The three joint programs proposed by the Faculty of Environmental Studies fulfill the spirit and substance of these principles.

Enhanced Educational and Career Opportunities

These initiatives certainly enhance opportunities for students from the partner institutions, and respond to a changing set of social and economic forces which have been at work in the environmental field. Throughout the development phase of the BES undergraduate program in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was both the perception of an expansion of government and business capability and commitment to environmental issues, and a clear recognition in the preferences of the general public that environmental concerns were a priority that required concerted and comprehensive program initiatives. During this period, the federal government initiated a wide-ranging "Green Plan" to fund research and institutional capability to support this concern for environmental issues. Environment Canada was seen to be an important ministry in the competition for funding at the cabinet level.

The creation of the BES Program was seen to be part of the societal initiative to address environmental concerns. Its goals were to give students both the analytical capabilities to understand the causes of environmental problems, as well as the "functionary" skills to generate the public policy which governmental programs required to create the institutional frameworks to solve problems.

While the analytical goals remain absolutely central to the educational goals of the BES Program, the "functionary" skills that accompany those goals have shifted from a public policy focus to more specific areas of expertise. Attacking the government deficit became the main public policy priority. As a result, the "Green Plan" all but disappeared from the policy agenda, and the provincial and federal governments' commitment to environmental issues weakened. At the same time, environmental concerns dropped considerably within the priorities of the general public, as people became more concerned with job creation and economic growth, although recently there are indications that,

indeed, interest in environmental issues on the part of the general public and federal government is increasing.

The recognition that the environmental agenda has a much lower profile in government presents challenges for the BES Program. In applied terms, career opportunities for BES graduates within the public sector have decreased. If BES graduates are going to work in the environmental field immediately after completing their degree, they will, in all likelihood, need some specific skills training to go along with analytical and communication skills. In these terms, we want students to have both the specific skills to get a job in the environmental field, as well as analytical capability to know how to change the world. Fulfilling these academic goals requires some reconfiguring in the way the BES Program locates itself both within the York community, as well as within other institutions in Ontario and abroad. The three joint programs will play a central role in this process and have co-op components that connect students directly with future employers in their field.

In *Skill-Set Documentation – Summary Report* published by The Canadian Council for Human Resources in the Environmental Industry, there is a clear identification of both critical skills and technical skills which are important for those seeking an environmental career. With regard to critical skills, the report emphasizes:

- thinking analytically and solving problems,
- synthesizing information and preparing adequate information,
- making decisions and choosing actions,
- developing projects and implementing them effectively,
- following through and producing results,
- communicating (talking and writing) effectively,
- being flexible and adapting to changes and new situations. (1995, p. 25)

These critical skills are combined with specific technical skills which

... are related to the areas of knowledge which are required for various jobs and occupations. They may be unique to a particular job, company or industry, and may need to be updated as jobs, procedures and technologies change. Technical skills are usually learned through some form of training, either in the classroom or on the job. Credits diplomas and degrees often recognize the level of technical skill which an individual has attained. (1995, p. 17)

The three joint programs integrate the critical skills offered by the university with the applied skills of the college programs, and prepares students for an environmental career in a way that exceeds the capabilities of each partner institution in the joint programs, if they were to pursue this integration of skills on their own.

This integration of critical skills and applied skills responds to society demands and enhanced employment opportunities in the environmental sector. The three college programs currently have a 100% success rate in placing students in co-op and field placement programs. When combined with a university education, career opportunities will not only be increased at the entry level, but also there will be a greater possibility for career advancement and promotion.

Educational Philosophies and Complementary Strengths

Joint programs are an interesting hybrid, in that the partner institutions have to be similar enough to share a common set of assumptions about education -- so that the project is workable -- and yet different enough to take advantage of the complementary strengths of the partner institution. As well as sharing the substantive areas of study related to foundational theme areas in the BES Program, the three college program's applied focus in education is sufficiently different so as to give students some specific skills that ground the critical skills and communication skills learned in the BES Program.

The BES Program has four foundation areas that aid students in developing their theme concentration. These areas include:

- Nature, Technology, and Society
- Human Settlements and Population
- Global Development, Peace and Justice
- Environmental Policy and Action

Whereas the first two years of the BES Program are dominated by required courses, the third and fourth years of the program are almost all elective courses. In the elective part of their program, students are expected to develop a theme concentration focus that they articulate in a program plan. Originally, this theme concentration culminated in students developing a research proposal in the winter term of their third year, and then completing their Senior Honours Work mini-thesis in their four year, along with their other upper level electives that fulfilled their depth and breadth requirements.

With the development of certificate programs and the potential college joint programs, students will now have an expanded choice in how they develop their theme concentration focus in the elective part of their programs. Therefore, the three college joint programs will become applied options in all four our theme concentration streams in the BES Program. The Ecosystem Management Joint Program with Sir Sandford Fleming College links well with the Nature, Technology, and Society Theme Area and the Environmental Policy and Action Theme Area; the Urban Sustainability Joint Program with Seneca College is closely associated with the Human Settlements and Population Theme Area; and the International Project Management Joint Program with Humber College fits well in our Global Development, Peace and Justice Theme Area. When we combine these joint programs with our newly-created certificate programs in Geographic Information Systems (24 credit) and Environmental Landscape Design (80 credits), we believe we will have gone a long way to providing the “applied edge” that are important for many environmental careers, and which are an excellent complement to the critical skills and the broad interdisciplinary education which remain the central strengths of the BES Program.

From the college perspective, the opportunity for their best students to move on from the three-year-college diploma to complete a university degree in Environmental Studies expands career possibilities as well as opportunities for future promotions and career advancement make the joint programs very attractive. Whereas the Seneca College and Sir Sandford Fleming Joint Programs are reciprocal programs with students moving in both directions, the Humber College Joint Program has students only moving from York to Humber. York students benefit from increased learning opportunities, while Humber is provided with access to high-quality students.

Funding and Administrative Issues

The three joint programs are very straightforward in terms of funding and administration. The time at York and the time at the Colleges are entirely separate and uninterrupted in terms of moving back and forth between institutions. While students are enrolled at York, they are York students and pay fees here, and receive grades here. When they are at the Colleges, they are enrolled there and pay fees there, and receive their grades based on college marking schemes. The Joint degree is awarded when the participating institutions are informed by the partner that students have completed the second stage of the joint program.

There additional funding required for the joint program is minimal, as students are enrolled as students in established programs, and that there are no new courses being created, aside from a required colloquium at the end of the joint programs which requires students to integrate their learning at York and at the respective college. This will be attended by the joint committee that oversees the joint programs, and provides an opportunity for the committee to gain feedback on student learning in the joint program, along with having a feedback session on students' experiences in the joint programs.

Advanced Standing and the Integrity of the York Degree

A central issue for consideration by the York Community are the levels of advanced standing granted to CAAT Diplomas in the context of the joint programs. In conversations with Michael Stevenson, Stan Shapson, Lucy Fromowitz, and Ygal Leib - as well as in the work of the SCARSA Sub-Committee on York-CAAT Relations -- the model that has emerged is one which grants advanced standing for complementarity as well as equivalency, and is specific to the joint program.

In the past, advanced standing was based on a course-by-course assessment of 'academic content' in CAAT programs, which then entitles a student to apply to any program at York. This model does not serve the purposes of joint programs based on complementarity. In the context of complementary joint programs, credit is given for learning opportunities that York regards as important and integral to the field, but does not have the expertise or resources to offer. As The Registrar states in the attached memo, a more useful approach to the advanced standing issues in complementary joint programs is one based on block credit offered to a student who successfully completes the CAAT diploma and applies to the joint program. This block credit is specific to the to the university faculty or department involved in the joint program. If a college student comes to York through the joint program, and then decides to transfer to another unit at York, he/she will revert to standard assessment of advanced standing based on equivalency. In short, block credit in the context of a joint program is advanced standing with a fence around it.

Another important aspect of advanced standing and the integrity of the York degree relates to the way in which college courses fit into the interdisciplinary approach to learning in the BES Program. Firstly, it is important to state that the BES degree is a Bachelors Degree *in* Environmental Studies, not a Bachelors Degree *of* Environmental Studies. Interdisciplinarity begins with the premise that, if you do not limit the substantive areas that can be studied, nor do you limit the methodologies of study, how then do you create program coherence? The FES response to this challenge is that

program coherence emerges out of the individual student's conceptualization of their interests in an evolving plan of study. Over the past forty years, FES has developed a curriculum which links individual student interests with a broad interdisciplinary education that emphasizes the interrelationship between theory and practice. So there has never been a single conception of a York degree in FES. Rather, it is a degree that is as manifold as the students who have passed through here. It is in this context that we understand the role the college programs play in terms of offering students an applied option to the Senior Honours Work mini-thesis. In the elective part of the program in which students are expected to develop a theme concentration focus, they will have the opportunity to pursue that focus while enrolled at a college beginning in their fourth year, and after having completed all the required courses in the BES Program, as well as the upper level courses which are central to an Honours degree at York.

In the case of students coming from the CAAT, the York Degree will broaden the basis of the largely applied education the students have received in the diploma programs. As well as doing all the required courses in the BES Program, the students who begin at the CAAT will do the General Education Requirements as well as having the opportunity to take elective courses in other parts of the university, while at the same time taking the third and fourth year courses which are required for an Honours degree at York. In the context of the BES Program, students who begin at the CAAT are understood as having completed their theme concentration focus before coming to York, whereas students who begin at York develop their focus in their third and fourth years.

With regard to strengthening the York degree, the external consultants state in the recent program review: “. . . the partnerships being developed with several community colleges may help to provide the “applied edge” that students have asked for, and that some faculty had hoped would be a defining attribute of the BES Program” (Jan. 28, 2000).

Program Design

The three joint programs are an applied option which is available in the elective part of the BES Program. The elective part of the program was initially organized around students taking ENVS 3011 3.0 Methods in Environmental Studies (Winter Term of third year) in which they develop a Senior Honours Work mini-thesis proposal. At the end of the course students are assigned a Senior Honours Work Supervisor, and then they enroll in ENVS 4000 6.0 Senior Honours Work, which is the capstone activity of their final year in the program. Although these two courses are required, they are organized around the student's area of interest and are supported by the upper level electives that form the depth and breadth of the program. Until recently, all BES students were required to organize their work around these courses. In most cases this process has worked well, especially for those students who are considering going directly to graduate school, and this stream will remain the primary basis of students pursuing their BES degree. But there is a cadre of students who would like to link their undergraduate education with some applied skills. This is already the case with our new Environmental Landscape Design certificate program. It is an 80-credit certificate and students are not required to do ENVS 3011 or ENVS 4000 because the certificate program is deemed to be the chosen focus of the program. The three joint programs also represent a structured focus which would exempt students from taking ENVS 3011 and ENVS 4000. In place of these courses, students in the joint program will take part in a Colloquium that links their experiences at the partner institutions. This Colloquium will have the same "capstone" function as ENVS 4000 6.0 Senior Honours Work in that it integrates their learning around a particular area of study which students have developed during their time in the joint program.

The other York courses which are replaced by college courses in the context of the joint program are elective courses which normally form the basis of the student's chosen theme concentration. For students who select it, the joint program provides this organizing focus. Students coming from the colleges to York are required to do all the required courses, except for our science-based courses (ENVS 1500 and ENVS 2500),

which would be redundant for them, and ENVS 3011 and ENVS 4000, for reasons discussed above.

After a clear sense of learning goals for the joint program have been established by the partner institutions, a collective consultation process created a package of combined courses which both fulfills the goals of the joint program as well as preserves and strengthens the integrity of the degrees and diplomas of the partner institutions. The BES Curriculum Committee has engaged in this process, as have the committees at the partner institutions. We then had a series of joint meetings to map out a path for the degree/diploma.

In the case of the BES-Seneca Joint Program in Urban Sustainability, the BES Program theme area of Human Settlements and Population will be greatly strengthened by the applied option offered by the Centre for the Built Environment, especially the courses in the Environmental stream, which is focused on land-use planning and GIS related applications. These kinds of courses provide a more detailed policy and skills focus to the theoretical courses in the Human Settlements theme area.

The BES-Sir Sandford Fleming Joint Program in Ecosystem Management links the two theme areas of Nature, Technology, and Society and Environmental Policy and Action with the applied skills of monitoring and assessment of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems which predominate in the college program. These kinds of applied courses complement the more macro-oriented and state-oriented courses in the BES theme areas.

The BES-Humber College Joint Program in International Project Management complements the Global Development, Peace and Justice theme area by offering students the opportunity to learn the skills required to work on a project team in an international context. This kind of linking of theory learned in courses such as Global Environmental Politics with the practice of business and communication skills strengthens this theme area greatly.

All three college programs have co-op placements and field placements built into their programs, which will give the York students who participate in the program increased opportunities to pursue careers in their chosen field. At the same time, the CAAT students who come to York will strengthen the presence of applied skills and specific experience in class discussions in BES courses. This will enhance the learning experience of all students in the BES Program.

Academic Regulations for the Joint Programs

BES students who are interested in applying to the joint programs would do so in the Fall Term of their third year. The application process would be completed by December of the Fall Term, so that the BES Academic Officer can be notified that these students will be exempt from ENV5 3011 3.0 Methods in Environmental Studies, which is the required course in the Winter Term of third year, and which prepared students to do ENV5 4000 6.0 Senior Honours Work in their fourth year. BES students must be in good standing in the BES program in order to apply, and must have taken the required courses specific to the joint program.

CAAT students applying to the joint programs will do so in the winter term of their final year of their three-year technologist diploma, and acceptance is contingent upon them successfully completing the diploma with a B average. Following the application process, students who are enrolled in the joint programs are subject to the regulations of the institution in which they are currently enrolled. While at York, students abide by university regulations, tuition fees, transcripts, and grading systems. When students are at the colleges, they are subject to the appropriate regulations governing those institutions.

Students must fulfill the requirements of both institutions before they are eligible to graduate from the joint program. If for some reason a student “stops-out” while at the partner institution, the academic provisions are as follows:

- If York students quit the joint program while they are at the colleges, they may return to the BES Program to complete their fourth year. Because York students cannot get credit for college courses while they are enrolled at York, they will have to re-apply to be admitted to York and the BES Program. At that point, the admissions office can then do a standard assessment for advanced standing, and the student will receive that advanced standing for whatever courses they did manage to complete while at the college. This advanced standing will be applied against their fourth-year requirements in the BES Program.
- CAAT students who have completed the technologist diploma and who have come to York – but who decide to quit the joint program – will receive a York transcript for whatever courses they have completed, although they will, of course, not receive the degree from the joint program.
- If students complete the required number of courses at either institution, but do not attain the required gpa, they can take an additional 12 credits (or two courses at the college) in order to raise their gpa to the minimum required to graduate.

Graduate School Opportunities

Students who graduate from the joint programs and then wish to apply to graduate school will have a transcript that is slightly different from most students. A standard method for assessing a student's acceptability to do graduate work is to look at their final two years of grades as an undergraduate. In the case of students who have gone through the joint programs, those last two years were spent at a college, rather than in university. It is the opinion of both Joanne Williams of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Lewis Molot, Graduate Program Director in Environmental Studies, that this does not pose a problem. They both stated that graduate programs would examine the final two years that the student spent at the university as a basis for acceptance into a graduate program.

Regulations for Field Placement in the Humber IPM Program

During their time in the IPM Program, students will develop a research project proposal which will, in principle, belong to Humber College, although students will be encouraged to submit these proposals to funding agencies on their own. York students who enroll in the IPM Program at Humber will also have a field placement in their final term. These field placements will deal with the assessment of how a particular program was implemented in the field, rather than having each student pursue individual research topics. In order to safeguard against inappropriate interventions or behaviour, students will be required to submit their research proposal ahead of time to a local field supervisor in the host country for approval so as to insure that there is an ethical review process for student proposals.

Students are also required to do a thorough risk assessment before departing for the host country. Students will have to demonstrate that they availed themselves of all available information regarding relevant risk issues, that they have extended health coverage, that they have an emergency evacuation plan, and they have a local contact in the host country who will take responsibility for them. This document will be approved by the student's program advisor.

Periodic Review of Joint Programs

In four years time, the participating institutions will undertake a review of the joint programs along the lines of a standard university program review process. Of especial interest will be an assessment of the performance of CAAT students in the university context, as well as with how York students perform in the college setting.