

**UNIVERSITY COUNCIL ACADEMIC
PROGRAMS COMMITTEE REQUEST
FOR DECISION**

PRESENTED BY: Roy Dobson, Chair, Academic Programs Committee of Council

DATE OF MEETING: April 17, 2014

SUBJECT: **Four-Year and Honours Degree, Biology and Biotechnology –
program termination**

DECISION REQUESTED:

It is recommended:

That Council approve the termination of the honours and four-year degree in Biology and Biotechnology, effective September 2014.

PURPOSE:

University Council approves termination of academic programs.

SUMMARY:

The program in Biology and Biotechnology was established as part of the Virtual College of Biotechnology and program priority initiative stemming from the VP Academic's office in the late 1990s. The Virtual College of Biotechnology has since been disbanded and program-specific courses related to the Virtual College of Biotechnology have generally disappeared from the course catalogue. Substitute courses have been added to the Biology and Biotechnology program, but low student interest plagues the program, with the program having an average of one graduate per year since 2007. A single faculty member (P Bonham-Smith) led the initiative and was responsible for student advising, but is no longer able to be involved with the program in this capacity. The department is unwilling to divert resources from other, more successful programs being offered to support the Biology and Biotechnology program. The few students currently in the program will be allowed to complete their degree.

REVIEW:

The Academic Programs Committee discussed this proposal with Jack Gray, Head, Department of Biology and Alexis Dahl, Director of Programs, Arts and Science. The committee noted the lack of formal consultation with students currently in the Biology and Biotechnology program, but was assured that students had been informed about the program termination proposal by way of annual individual student advising. The program specializes in an area that, due to advances in Biology, no longer serves academic or industry needs. Students completing a degree in Biology and Biotechnology are less employable in the area of Biotechnology than students with a strong lab background and a general degree in Biology.

ATTACHMENTS:

Proposal documents; Letters of support.



Program(s) to be deleted: Biology & Biotechnology

Effective date of termination: September 2014

1. List reasons for termination and describe the background leading to this decision.

The Biology and Biotechnology (BIOL/BTEC) programs were established as part of the “Virtual College of Biotechnology” and program priority initiative stemming from the VP Academic’s office in the late 1990s. The programs were built upon existing course offerings in BIOL and some new courses offered by partner departments in the initiative. Several undergraduate programs in Biotechnology were established in the Virtual College and a number of courses were developed within the partner departments for the programs. The programs in Biology were built entirely with existing resources and no new money came to the department from the Virtual College of Biotechnology initiative. With the passage of time, the Virtual College of Biotechnology was disbanded and the specific courses developed for the various programs have pretty much all disappeared from the course catalogue. Substitute courses were added to the Biology & Biotechnology program but the program has always suffered from low enrolment and graduation rates (high of 5 in 2007 and low of 0 in 2010). The Honours program has had on average one graduate per year over this timeframe, indicating a generally low student demand for this program. There are likely many reasons for this, including highly prescriptive program requirements and a drift away from the original biotechnology initiative by the various partner departments in the old “Virtual College of Biotechnology”. Within the Department of Biology, a single faculty member lead the initiative and was responsible for student advising in the program. This faculty member (P Bonham-Smith) is no longer able to do this and the Department is unwilling to divert resources away from the other more successful programs they are currently offering.

Students currently in this program will be allowed to complete the requirements and convocate with this major, within a reasonable period of time.

2. Technical information.

2.1 Courses offered in the program and faculty resources required for these courses.

There are no courses offered specifically for this program. Students choose from existing BIOL courses or those existing in cognate departments.

2.2 Other resources (staff, technology, physical resources, etc) used for this program.

The program requires time for student advising, which was provided by a single faculty member.

2.3 Courses to be deleted, if any.

None.

2.4 Number of students presently enrolled.

14 students in the BSc 4-year program, 1 student in the BSc Honours program.

2.5 Number of students enrolled and graduated over the last five years.

Enrolled:

2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
10	9	10	15	10

Graduated

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (spring only)
4	0	4	1	2

Data from U of S Information Strategy and Analytics

3. Impact of the termination.

Internal

3.1 What if any impact will this termination have on undergraduate and graduate students?
How will they be advised to complete their programs?

The Department of Biology wishes to discontinue the program effective January 1 2014. Students who have declared a major in BIOL/BTEC by this date will continue to be accommodated in the program. However, no new students will be allowed in the program beyond this date. If they wish, students currently listing BIOL/BTEC as their major can also transition over to complete a regular BIOL program. Students will be advised of this through the regular Department of Biology advising programs. We will specifically contact existing majors and encourage them to seek advice from the Department.

3.2 What impact will this termination have on faculty and teaching assignments?

No changes are anticipated.

3.3 Will this termination affect other programs, departments or colleges?

No impact is anticipated. Student enrollment in the Biology & Biotechnology program is very minimal and students will continue to be accommodated in existing BIOL courses.

3.4 If courses are also to be deleted, will these deletions affect any other programs?

N/A

- 3.5 Is it likely, or appropriate, that another department or college will develop a program to replace this one?

Biotechnology programs are currently offered through Biochemistry, Microbiology & Immunology, and in some of the programs in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources.

- 3.6 Is it likely, or appropriate, that another department or college will develop courses to replace the ones deleted?

N/A

- 3.7 Describe any impact on research projects.

None.

- 3.8 Will this deletion affect resource areas such as library resources, physical facilities, and information technology?

No effect is anticipated.

- 3.9 Describe the budgetary implications of this deletion.

None.

External

- 3.10 Describe any external impact (e.g. university reputation, accreditation, other institutions, high schools, community organizations, professional bodies).

No impact is anticipated.

- 3.11 Is it likely or appropriate that another educational institution will offer this program if it is deleted at the University of Saskatchewan?

This is unlikely. SIAST already offers a 2 year diploma in Bioscience Technology (renamed from their Biotechnology program).

Other

- 3.12 Are there any other relevant impacts or considerations?

Though the decision to delete this program pre-dates the Transform Us recommendations, it is relevant to note that this program was placed in Quintile 5.

- 3.13 Please provide any statements or opinions received about this termination.

Please see College Statement.



MEMORANDUM

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

DIVISION OF SCIENCE

TO: Roy Dobson, Chair, Academic Programs Committee

FROM: Peta Bonham-Smith, Vice-Dean (Science)

DATE: February 19, 2014

RE: Deletion of the B.A. 4-year and Honours programs in Biology & Biotechnology

This memo confirms that the College of Arts & Sciences supports the deletion of the B.Sc. program in Biology & Biotechnology, as set out in the Program Termination form. The specific courses in biotechnology have almost all been deleted, or are not being offered with adequate regularity, due to lack of resources or limited demand.

Students who have begun work on these programs prior to May 2014 will be allowed to complete, per College of Arts and Science regulations. These students will be advised on a case-by-case basis.

The proposal to terminate the program was submitted to the College Course Challenge in October 2013, and was approved by the Academic Programs Committee (Science) on October 22, 2013. The proposal was approved by the Divisional Faculty Council (Science) on January 28, 2014.

Peta Bonham-Smith