**Mason Core Committee Agenda**

February 11, 2021

1:00-2:30pm

1. Announcement: Mason Core charge update approved
2. Review proposals
3. Start talking about capstone/synthesis challenges and outcomes
4. Preview of Mason degree outcomes discussion

**In Attendance:** Bethany Usher (co-chair), Melissa Broeckelman-Post (co-chair), Lorelei Crerar, Jane Hooper, Moses Hunsaker, Beth Johnson, Jason Kinser, Laura Poms, Shelley Reid, Mara Schoeny, Sheena Serslev, Krista Shires, JP Singh, Ben Steger, Deb Stroiney, Courtney Wooten, Shun Ye

**Guests:** Tom Polk, Lauren Cattaneo, Jessica Rosenberg, Jamie Clark, Elisabeth Epstein, Jennifer-Bazaz Gettys, Deb Polayes

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| **Category** | **Title** | **Notes** |
| CAP | [ARAB 355: Advanced Arabic Media: Debates & Context](https://workingcatalog.gmu.edu/courseleaf/courseleaf.cgi?page=/courseadmin/16249/index.html&step=showfullrecord) | Requirement for a Capstone is that it is at the 400 level; Structurally, it’s concerning that this doesn’t show as a later course or a capstone type course**. VOTE:** **Rollback (50/50 for revisions/no encouragement)** |
| GU | [UNIV 381: Foundations for Building a Just Society](https://workingcatalog.gmu.edu/courseleaf/courseleaf.cgi?page=/courseadmin/17066/index.html&step=showfullrecord) | Discussion was had surrounding how this course would be handled moving forward. It is not a new category, so how do you ensure that it is taken (if that is the goal). Right now, the question is to approve it for these categories, like any other course. Later, as the ARIE initiative goes forward, it may be a different discussion. Members were concerned that this would be used to provide an illustration of the Committee’s approval of ARIE as a category. Questions: what is being meant by the globalization aspect here? Are domestic competencies the same as international competencies? What is meant as a “just society”? **VOTE: Approved as is** |
| SBS | [UNIV 381: Foundations for Building a Just Society](https://workingcatalog.gmu.edu/courseleaf/courseleaf.cgi?page=/courseadmin/17066/index.html&step=showfullrecord) | **VOTE: Approved as it** |
| CAP | [ARAB 351: Media Arabic II (Spoken Media)](https://workingcatalog.gmu.edu/courseleaf/courseleaf.cgi?page=/courseadmin/490/index.html&step=showfullrecord) | Attribute Removal Only |
| SYNTH | [COS 310: Introduction to Science Policy](https://workingcatalog.gmu.edu/courseleaf/courseleaf.cgi?page=/courseadmin/16861/index.html&step=showfullrecord) | **VOTE: Approved as is** Concerns with this course being a 300 level not 400. This is permitted technically, but consider changing the number. |
| NSL | [BIOL 105: Introductory Biology II Laboratory](https://workingcatalog.gmu.edu/courseleaf/courseleaf.cgi?page=/courseadmin/1407/index.html&step=showfullrecord) | **VOTE: Approved as is** |
| NSL | [COS 301: Great Ideas in Science](https://workingcatalog.gmu.edu/courseleaf/courseleaf.cgi?page=/courseadmin/16883/index.html&step=showfullrecord) | Title Change Only |
| SBS | [ANTH 121: People of the Earth: Humanity's First Five Million Years](https://workingcatalog.gmu.edu/courseleaf/courseleaf.cgi?page=/courseadmin/16964/index.html&step=showfullrecord) | **VOTE: Approved as is** |
| IT | [SYST 130: Introduction to Computing for Digital Systems Engineering](https://workingcatalog.gmu.edu/courseleaf/courseleaf.cgi?page=/courseadmin/17021/index.html&step=showfullrecord) | **VOTE: Approved as is** |
| NSNL | [BIOL 103: Introductory Biology II-Survey of Cell and Molecular Biology](https://workingcatalog.gmu.edu/courseleaf/courseleaf.cgi?page=/courseadmin/1403/index.html&step=showfullrecord) | **VOTE: Approved as is** |
| NSL | [BIOL 102: Introductory Biology I-Survey of Biodiversity and Ecology](https://workingcatalog.gmu.edu/courseleaf/courseleaf.cgi?page=/courseadmin/17025/index.html&step=showfullrecord) | **VOTE: Approved as is** |

**Capstone/Synthesis Discussion:**The committee has previously attempted to clarify the requirements for Synthesis and Capstone categories and published guidelines for Capstone in 2018. However, the proposals we are seeing still show evidence of confusion among faculty. There are questions about course level requirements (i.e. 400 level for Capstone), what does a culminating experience course look like? Are students aware that this is meant to be a culminating experience that has some meaning? Are they able to articulate why this is not just “another course”? Students are required to have either a Capstone or a Synthesis to fulfill graduation requirements. Sometimes students are confused about what these courses are and attempt to join in at the wrong time. Should there be only one category to clarify? Previously, departments balked at having to have a synthesis and the idea of having one or the other was settled upon in order to make it generally less taxing on everyone. Some disciplines feel that a Capstone (more project based) is more relevant to their programs and more useful for students while others feel that synthesis is more appropriate. It was proposed that we have a general category, with two options. This could be similar to the Mason Impact in which there is a main category (MI) and options within it (RS, CECL, etc). Or, keep the titles, but tighten the requirements within the SLOs themselves. Could be a couple requirements across both (400-level, emphasis on oral/written communication, etc.) but with several outcomes to choose from so there is flexibility. From a writing perspective, placing the synthesis at the 400 level makes a lot of sense; the bridging of two disciplines can be a real challenge for students. There are also accreditation issues- some programs do need to have a capstone for their outside accreditation. One member suggested that everyone does 1,2,3, (comm, integrate, etc.) and then chooses either Project or Synth as the fourth component. There’s also an ongoing conversation to have about ensuring — or at least tilting toward the likelihood —that students arrive prepared for either synthesis-thinking or project-based learning. So there might be both some curriculum mapping and advising ripples out to this discussion.

Next Meeting: Continue the Synthesis/Capstone requirement conversation. University-wide outcomes discussion