

## Student FAQ on Proposed Faculty Restructuring December 3, 2021

This has been a long term and we want to acknowledge your effort, dedication, and commitment to completing your courses.

We also know that you may be feeling anxious about the University's budget realities. **Anxiety and misinformation often go with times of uncertainty.**

**We want to be proactive and transparent about what is happening at the University** and to answer questions we have received during the restructuring consultations inspired by the Faculties Structures taskforce.

Yes, there are **external** pressures to reduce our budget, and this is affecting our financial position and our need to make changes.

However, given the reality of rapid change in the world around us economically, technologically, and societally, **the University needs to regularly examine how we continue to offer an experience that best prepares students** to meet current and future challenges.

**To support the clarity of this FAQ**, we have supplied a **short glossary of terms at the end of document.**

### How will the Faculties be restructured?

A broad recommendation has been made by President's Executive Council to work toward a move from eight Faculties/Schools to five and to find ways to combine departments/areas within those Faculties. However, **no decisions have been made** on where department/units will be placed or the ultimate Faculty structures. Consultations are underway with students and Faculty Councils where faculty members are being asked to identify what avenues of consolidation can best support teaching, learning, and program delivery.

### Will my program be cancelled because of the restructuring?

**No.** In fact, the goal of Faculty restructuring is **protect to your academic programming** (degrees, majors, number of courses offered) from cuts **by focusing instead on how we can better organize our administrative structures**

(Faculties, Schools, Departments, and other academic units) to save money and more efficiently support student degree programs.

### **Will my department be abolished in the restructuring?**

**No decisions have been made.** We are waiting until the consultations with students and Faculty Councils (made up of your professors, instructors, and student representatives) and others have concluded, and students and faculty have provided their feedback. Departments are administrative units, and it is likely that some departments will combine with other departments and take on new or joint names as a result of the restructuring process. In many instances, bringing faculty together will strengthen the programs and research opportunities offered to students.

It is important to know that the name or make-up of an administrative structure like a Faculty, School or department does not affect the name of the degree or major you earn.

## **Academic Credentials**

### **Will the name of my degree change? Will my degree requirements change?**

**No**, the name of your degree will not change, nor will your program requirements – even if your Faculty or department is affected by the restructuring.

**Your credential is a significant part of your academic journey.** When you apply for jobs after you graduate, it will be with your credential, e.g., Bachelor of Science, major in Neuroscience, not the name of your Faculty or department.

Your professors, the experts in their fields, continually reassess programs of study and do update program requirements on occasion. This reassessment will continue with or without Faculty Restructuring. However, students are reminded that as per the Academic Calendar, you are governed by the program requirements in effect at the time of your most recent admission. This ensures that even if program requirements change during a student's years of study, they can complete their degree without delay.

### **How will this affect the quality of my degree?**

**The quality of your degree will not be affected.** This restructuring is **consistent with your Liberal Education experience** — you're already taking classes across

Faculties and renaming or reorganizing the units that offer those courses does not change these opportunities and our goal is to enhance them.

We never want to be satisfied with the status quo. Rather, we want to continue to examine the ways in which **we need to transform ourselves to best support teaching, learning, and program delivery.**

## Course Availability

**Will the University offer fewer courses? It is already difficult to find classes. The goal of Faculty restructuring is to protect academic programming, including course delivery.** It is true that the successive years of significant and ongoing budget cuts have affected the number of options Faculties and Schools are able to offer, and they have had to prioritize required course offerings.

We must continue to protect our ability to offer the courses students need to graduate, despite ongoing budget reductions, and this is precisely why we are pursuing Faculty Restructuring. Restructuring shields **academic programming** (degrees, majors, number of courses offered) from cuts **by focusing instead on how we can better organize our administrative structures** (Faculties, Schools, departments) to save money and more efficiently support student degree programs and the courses within them.

**Faculty restructuring will increase the number of faculty available to teach.** One of the primary goals of the restructuring is to combine a number of administrative and leadership appointments held by professors, allowing us to release them back to their teaching assignments, increasing the number of courses on offer.

The timetable for the **2022 Spring term** is published and available. **Register via the Bridge as soon as you can for the best chance at getting the classes you want.**

### Will I be able to graduate on time?

**Yes. Please meet with your academic advisor to discuss your program and make sure you are on track to graduate.** Priority access to courses is always given to students who are in the final year of their degree. If there is a barrier to your graduation caused by the University, we will work with you to find an alternate way so you will complete your program on schedule.

## Student Feedback and Participation

### Will students be consulted as part of this process?

**There is student representation at both Faculty Councils and the General Faculties Council meetings. We welcome feedback from all students.** We will:

- Record the ULSU Town Halls on the restructuring (December 6 and 13)
- We will post the town hall recordings on the budget website [ulethbridge.ca/budget-finance/content/messages-president-mahon](http://ulethbridge.ca/budget-finance/content/messages-president-mahon)
- Send a survey to students, which will be available from mid-December into January, to capture your comments and concerns
- Update this FAQ as information is available

### How will my opinions be heard?

The ULSU is hosting two virtual Town Halls on December 6 and 13 with representation from President's Executive Council and Student Affairs at the events. They will be recorded and posted on the budget website for those who cannot attend.

### I'm better at writing my feedback than speaking in a large group.

We will be sending all students a Qualtrics feedback form in December (with a deadline for submission in January) where you can voice your concerns, give us your feedback on the restructuring, and supply input on how the University can mitigate the severe budgetary crisis we face.

## Benefits to Students

### What opportunities will there be for students as a result of this restructuring?

- **More resources** redirected to teaching courses
- Avoid dramatic cuts to **student services**
- **New collaborations** across academic disciplines could result in added creative and innovative, research, program and course options
- Opportunities for **new multidisciplinary undergraduate and graduate programs**

## Have or will any of the other transformation task force recommendations affect the student experience in positive ways?

Yes, for example:

- **Improving advising services** for students
- The potential for a **Student Affairs hub**
- Reducing curriculum barriers and making an **automated program planning guide** so students can see real-time progress toward program completion
- One stop shop for **wellness services**
- Other external funding sources have allowed a **35% increase in mental health support**, achieved through a partnership with Alberta Health Services in September 2021.
- **Increase in funding of bursaries** (i.e., the \$378K added by the University this year to support the new Work 2 Learn (W2L) project and other bursaries).
- A work-integrated learning (WIL), MyExperience Transcript, and Career Services **one-stop shop was created at Career Bridge** in July 2020 and **student opportunities for WIL are increasing, an outcome of reorganization as a result of one of the Transformation Task Forces.**

## Financial Realities

### Where can I see the financial facts associated with restructuring?

The Town Hall presentations on December 6 and 13 will include this information, and the recordings will be posted here:

[ulethbridge.ca/budget-finance/content/messages-president-mahon](https://ulethbridge.ca/budget-finance/content/messages-president-mahon)

The budget and the recommendations of the Faculty Structures task force, and the budget recommendations from President's Executive Council, are also posted on the University website and can be accessed by anyone.

[ulethbridge.ca/sites/default/files/2021/09/task\\_force\\_2022-23\\_pres\\_exec\\_budget\\_recommendations\\_sept\\_10-21\\_final.pdf](https://ulethbridge.ca/sites/default/files/2021/09/task_force_2022-23_pres_exec_budget_recommendations_sept_10-21_final.pdf)

### Why don't we have enough money to continue to run our university?

There are **external pressures to reduce our budget**, and this is **affecting our financial position** and our need to make changes.

Over the past 10+ years, we have weathered other budget crises by cutting our expenses, changing our processes, and increasing revenues where possible. **In order to meet the current fiscal challenges, structural changes to the administrative function of our university are necessary.**

The University will continue to run, and we will continue to support our student programs.

### **You just finished the Shine campaign. Why can't that money be used to support the operations of the university?**

The money raised through the Shine campaign was asked to support specific projects including student scholarships, emergency bursaries for students, for programs that support the student experience, and capital projects. **The money raised is earmarked and cannot be used for other purposes that were not specified by external donors.**

### **What will students lose if the University does not make changes to administrative expenses through restructuring?**

The University is required by the Government of Alberta to send a balanced budget. Cuts will have to happen elsewhere, which may include further reductions in services and opportunities.

This may result in:

- Fewer student services
- Fewer course options
- Fewer administrative supports for faculties and departments

## **Glossary**

### **Faculty vs faculty**

Faculty is a subdivision of the University and refers to an administrative unit, e.g., Faculty of Health Sciences. Small "f" faculty refers to the professors and instructors who teach your courses.

### **Faculty or School vs department/program area**

All are administrative units. A department or program area is an administrative subdivision of a Faculty or School. e.g., both the Department of Biological Sciences

and the Department of Sociology are smaller administrative units within the larger administrative unit of the Faculty of Arts and Science

### **Program vs major**

- Your program is the sum of course requirements that lead to the completion of an academic credential like a degree, diploma, or certificate. e.g., Bachelor of Health Sciences
- Your major is the focus of your program: a defined set of courses in a subject area. e.g., Public Health