

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Four-year honours becomes the standard degree at Laurier

Move reflects decreasing prominence of three-year general degrees

For Immediate Release

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**Contact: Dr. Sue Horton
Vice-President: Academic
(519) 884-0710 ext. 2221**

**or Michael Strickland
Manager, Media Relations & Information
(519) 884-0710 ext 3070**

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University is moving to meet student need and demand for the four-year undergraduate degrees that are the norm outside Ontario and across the United States. At a senate meeting yesterday, the university voted to make the four-year honours degree its standard undergraduate degree.

Beginning in September 2007, high-school students admitted to a bachelor of arts (BA) or bachelor of science (BSc) program will begin a four-year course of study leading to an honours degree. General degrees, whether three or four years in length, will be reserved for part-time, mature or college transfer students, and those who do not meet honours requirements.

The decision to encourage completion of a four-year honours degree reflects the increasing desirability of longer and more rigorous programs.

“The three-year general degree is losing prominence,” said Sue Horton, vice-president: academic at Laurier. “Some professional schools in the U.S., for example, have noted Ontario’s shorter secondary-school experience and are rejecting general degrees from Ontario as the basis for admission. Also, there’s evidence that higher education increases lifelong employability, productivity and quality of life, so this decision will benefit the vast majority of students.”

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As is currently the case, BA students (including those in economics or studying at Laurier Brantford) and BSc students will have to successfully complete all program requirements and achieve a minimum grade point average (GPA) to earn an honours designation.

Those without the minimum GPA will have the option of receiving a four-year general degree that notes one or more majors. The three-year general degree will be available to students who do not need or want in-depth study in a particular area.

To earn an honours degree, a student must successfully complete 20 credits, and meet rigorous and detailed program requirements. The four-year general degree still has 20 credits, but the GPA requirements are not quite as demanding. The three-year general degree requires 15 credits and has simpler program requirements.

The university is also eliminating academic probation at the honours level for the BA and BSc degrees. Students who are unable to meet the program requirements will progress in the four-year general program. Those unable to progress at the general level will be placed on probation or asked to withdraw, as appropriate, given university regulations.

All changes are being phased in between now and September 2007. The generic general degree will be available to students beginning this fall and, as of fall 2007, majors will no longer be offered to students completing three-year degrees.