

Bachelor of General Studies – Thematic Option

If you are thinking of developing a specialized area of study as part of your BGS degree and would like to focus on a theme in which UFV does not offer a major or minor this information may help you decide if this is the right choice for you.

What is the Thematic Option?

It is an integrated collection of studies in an area in which UFV does not offer a major or a minor. The purpose of the thematic option is to enable you to create a relevant and coherent education program that encourages the crossing of traditional disciplinary boundaries. In other words, within the structure of the BGS graduation requirements, you study a topic that you have chosen as your individual area of special interest.

What are some possible thematic areas?

There are no pre-designed thematic areas; each thematic area will be unique. Some possible choices might be: *international studies, gender issues, public administration, Canadian studies, indigenous studies, applied research, Latin American literature, tourism management, social studies, peace studies, public policy, conflict resolution, facilitating adult learning, explorations of ageing, advertising and visual communication, language and culture studies, environmental studies, religious studies.*

What are the technical requirements for a Thematic Option?

In order to have your particular Thematic Option designated on your transcript, you will need to successfully complete all the BGS requirements, including a minimum of 24 upper-level credits (courses that are designated by UFV as 300-level and/or 400-level) in your thematic area. Your Thematic Option must be reviewed and approved by a team of at least two faculty members.

Do I have to have a certain grade point average in my thematic area?

Yes. You must achieve a 2.0 GPA in all courses in your thematic area.

What if I choose a theme that interests me but the courses I would like to take are not available at UFV—can I take courses at other postsecondary institutions?

Yes. However, you will have to make sure that at least 6 credits of the Required 24 upper-level credits in your thematic area are completed in UFV studies. For each course that you wish to complete elsewhere, you will need to complete a “Letter of Permission” form, available from the Registrar’s Office or from the website: <http://www.ufv.ca/ar/forms.htm>

**Does anyone check over my plan—do I require any kind of special approval?
If so, who does the reviewing and who grants approval?**

Several faculty members from appropriate discipline areas will review your thematic option request. The faculty members may offer additional ideas, recommend changes if necessary, and provide final approval or recommendations for further planning.

Is it possible to change my mind once the faculty team approves my program plan—can I amend my plan after it has been approved?

Yes. If you decide to rearrange your courses or shift the emphasis of your Thematic Option, you will need to confirm these choices with the BGS Advisor. Major changes will require a formal amendment to your original plan, after a review by the faculty team. Do not forget, however, that major changes (and sometimes even seemingly minor changes) may require you to take extra courses.

What are some of the exciting aspects of this type of program?

Several things make this opportunity very stimulating. For example:

- You get to be in charge of your own learning
- You create your own way of integrating theory and practice in a way that makes sense to you and around a topic which has meaning for you
- You develop a greater awareness of your own strengths as a learner.

What are some of the challenges?

A degree with an individualized focus can mean you face challenges such as:

- Trying to figure out what your area of special interest is
- Taking the time to determine the particular combination of courses that will comprise your thematic focus
- Setting out a realistic plan that takes into account your various resources (time, energy, access to courses, finances, etc.)

Who would be my initial contact person if I decide to pursue the Thematic Option?

Contact the BGS Advisor, Mandy Klepic.

By phone: (604) 851 6333, Toll free 1-888-504-7441 local 6333

By email: mandy.klepic@ufv.ca

By fax: (604) 855-7514

By mail: 33844 King Road, Abbotsford, BC V2S 7M8

How do I get started? For a step-by-step guide, check out the next pages.

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Step-by-Step Guide to Developing a Thematic Area

STEP 1: Get Information

Find out about the Thematic Option by reading the information materials, talking with the BGS Advisor, with faculty and other students.

STEP 2: Develop Your Ideas

If you find the idea of a Thematic Option appealing but you do not have a particular focus in mind yet, you can:

- ◆ Brainstorm some ideas
- ◆ Check with the BGS Advisor to see which areas others have considered
- ◆ Refer to the list of ideas that are included in this information package
- ◆ Browse through some on-line and print materials that describe majors, minors, and concentrations in programs at other postsecondary institutions.

Once you have some ideas, develop them further. You might begin by writing a paragraph *for yourself* explaining why you find the topic interesting. What is it about this particular subject that captures your interest? Has your workplace or your social group or your reading or your family nudged you in this direction? Will learning more about this topic enhance your goals in some special way? Keep this initial paragraph (or perhaps you will do a few drafts!). You may use it in the future.

STEP 3: Develop a Preliminary List of Possible Course Choices

Using the UFV calendar, begin to generate a list of courses that you think are relevant to your thematic area. To get additional ideas, you may want to look through the calendars/websites of other postsecondary institutions.

STEP 4: Complete and Submit the “BGS Thematic Option Expression of Interest” forms

This form is available from the BGS Program Advisor or the BGS website:

http://www.ufv.ca/Bachelor_of_General_Studies/Customize/ThematicOptions.htm

Here you indicate the focus of your Thematic Option, identify courses to support your thematic option, write a statement articulating how the courses relate to each other and support the learning theme. Ensure you address the criteria for approval items on page 7.

Submit the completed form to the BGS Program Advisor. The Advisor will consult with the BGS Advisory Committee and then forward the package to the faculty team for review. Once a decision is made, you will be notified.

BACHELOR OF GENERAL STUDIES

Thematic Option

Principles & Guidelines for Integrating a Thematic Area into the BGS

Principles

1. The purpose of the degree is to enable students to create relevant, coherent, and individualized educational programs that encourage the crossing of traditional disciplinary boundaries.
2. The BGS thematic option is an integrated collection of studies in an area in which UFV does not offer a major.
3. Learning in formal and informal settings are acceptable; evidence of *learning* (rather than evidence of experience) is required in order for the learning to be applicable to the thematic area.
4. Learning is a shared responsibility of the learner and the institution.
5. A learner's goals may shift from time to time, resulting in a request for changes to an approved educational plan.

Guidelines

1. The plan must include a minimum of 24 upper-level credits in the thematic area, of which a minimum of 6 credits must be from UFV studies (courses that are designated by UFV as 300- and/or 400-level).
2. The student must complete all studies in the thematic area with a minimum GPA of 2.0.
3. A proposal for a thematic area can be submitted at any time after a student is admitted to the BGS program. Your request should be submitted no later than the beginning of year three.
4. The plan must be cross-disciplinary, with studies from a minimum of two different discipline areas.
5. A team of at least two faculty members will review and approve proposals for thematic options. For purposes of continuity, one of the faculty members will be from the BGS Curriculum Committee. The second faculty member will be from a discipline related to the student's thematic area. A third member may be included in the review process where appropriate and may be recommended by the learner.

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Expression of Interest

Please provide the information requested on this form and return to the BGS Advisor.

Name: _____ Student # _____
Daytime Phone _____ Evening Phone _____
Email Address _____ Date _____

I am interested in focusing my studies around the theme of

This area captures my interest because

More specifically, five things I would like to learn about this particular thematic area are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Please include a one-page statement demonstrating how the selected courses relate to each other and the learning objectives.

You will need to address these items in your BGS Thematic Option

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Criteria for Approval

You need to address these items in your proposal.

Statement of Purpose

- Is the statement of purpose complete?
- Does it indicate why the theme is of interest?
- Does it indicate the focus of the area of study?

Learning Objectives

- Have you identified the main objective?
- Have you identified supplementary objectives?

Relationship between Theme & Course Selection

- Have you demonstrated how *each* course relates directly to the theme?
- Does this thematic area duplicate/nearly duplicate an existing UFV major?
- Is this an appropriate academic endeavour?

Depth of Learning

- Is the selection of courses chosen to reflect the theme sufficient to give you a depth of understanding of the subject?
- Does the plan include a minimum of 24 upper-level credits in the thematic area?
- Does the plan include necessary prerequisite studies?

Breadth of Learning

- Does the thematic area include studies in a minimum of two different discipline areas at the upper-level?

Achievability

- Have you addressed any concerns about access to UFV courses or courses to be taken elsewhere?