



VERSION 1.1

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION POLICY

Effective from
Fall 2023



Curriculum Division
Higher Education Commission
Government of Pakistan



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I: INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the Undergraduate Education Policy (UGEP). It is applicable to the Associate Degree and Bachelor Degree programs offered by the Pakistani universities and Degree Awarding Institutes (DAIs).

Objectives of the Undergraduate Education Policy:

The primary objective of the policy is to promote the student success which is envisioned as the ability to comprehend and apply conceptual knowledge, acquire professional skills and competencies, and act as an individual having strong civic and ethical values of tolerance and inclusiveness. The specific objectives of the policy include the following:

- a) **Competency Based Learning:** To develop the 21st century outcomes of the learning process focusing mainly on:
 - i. **Knowledge** (disciplinary, interdisciplinary, epistemic, procedural, etc.)
 - ii. **Skills** (communication and soft skills, proficient use of ICT, integrated, analytical and quantitative reasoning, creative thinking, etc.)
 - iii. **Professional Behavior** (self-regulation, time management, integrity, intellectual curiosity, intellectual openness, etc.)
 - iv. **Interpersonal Attributes** (empathy, self-efficacy, teamwork, etc.)
- b) **Balance between Breadth and Depth:** To ensure that the undergraduate education focuses not only on the main field of specialization but also provides exposure to the interdisciplinary areas of knowledge.
- c) **Applied Knowledge:** To promote application of academic knowledge to effectively respond to real life, entrepreneurial and industry challenges and requirements.
- d) **Emphasis on Creativity:** To equip students with the sense and ability to demonstrate creativity, curiosity, exploration and reflective problem solving.
- e) **Terminal Degree:** To design all undergraduate degrees with an objective of making them sufficient to meet the requirements of the job market. It will however be at the discretion of the graduates to seek further education.

Types of Degrees:

There are five categories of the undergraduate/equivalent degree programs, as detailed below:

- a) **Four-Year Degree Programs:** These include four-year degree programs which do not require licensure.

- b) **Five-Year Degree Programs:** These include five-year degree programs which do not require licensure.
- c) **Four-Year Degree Programs (requiring Licensure):** These include four-year degree programs which require licensure in order to enable graduates practice in the field. These are mainly offered in disciplines which are regulated by their respective accreditation or professional councils.
- d) **Five-Year Degree Programs (requiring Licensure):** These include five-year degree programs which require licensure in order to enable graduates practice in the field. These are also offered in disciplines which are regulated by their respective accreditation or professional councils.
- e) **Two-Year Associate Degree Programs:** These include two-year degree programs offering fundamental academic and working knowledge of a particular field to enable graduates enter in the job market earlier than those who enter after four-year undergraduate/ equivalent degree programs. These programs generally do not require licensure unless required by their respective accreditation or professional councils.

II: FRAMEWORK OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

The structure of undergraduate/equivalent degree programs is designed to balance general education, disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and practical requirements to enhance the likelihood of student success. The structure of all undergraduate/equivalent degree programs, irrespective of field of study, program duration and licensure requirements, is comprised of the following set of mandatory requirements:

- a) **General Education (Gen Ed) Requirements:** This component comprises of the mandatory courses of general education aimed to prepare students to refine their scholarly abilities to reason and communicate clearly and effectively. The provision of general education courses ensures that every student is acquainted with the broad variety of fields of inquiry and approaches to knowledge and skills. It offers students an intellectual foundation for their academic, professional, and personal attributes while focusing on critical thinking and writing, speaking or quantitative skills. The minimum requirement for the general education component is 30 credits in all the undergraduate/equivalent degree programs including Associate Degrees. Universities may however add more courses as and when required provided that the minimum credits and course categories as prescribed in this policy are maintained. Detail of the general education requirements (i.e., courses) is given In Table 1.
- b) **Major (Disciplinary) Requirements:** A major is the academic discipline or a specialized area of study in which the degree is offered. The minimum requirement to complete a single major is 72 credit hours. This is valid for all undergraduate/equivalent degree programs except for Associate Degrees.

| General Education Cluster | Courses | Credit Hours |
|---|-----------|--------------|
| Arts and Humanities * | 1 | 02 |
| Natural Sciences * | 1 | 3 (2+1) |
| Social Sciences * | 1 | 02 |
| Functional English ** | 1 | 03 |
| Expository Writing ** | 1 | 03 |
| Quantitative Reasoning ** | 2 | 06 |
| Islamic Studies ** (OR) Religious Education/Ethics in lieu of Islamic Studies only for non-Muslim students | 1 | 02 |
| Ideology and Constitution of Pakistan ** | 1 | 02 |
| Applications of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) ** | 1 | 3 (2+1) |
| Entrepreneurship ** | 1 | 02 |
| Civics and Community Engagement ** | 1 | 02 |
| Total | 12 | 30 |
| <p>* University may offer any course within the specific broader subject domain/cluster to meet the given credits. ** HEC designed model courses may be used by the university.</p> | | |

Table 1: List of Courses in General Education Cluster

- c) Interdisciplinary/Allied Requirements:** Interdisciplinary courses are those offered in allied or complementary disciplines to reinforce the notion of interdisciplinary competency and to support horizon of the major.
- d) Field Experience/Internship:** Field experience is a professional learning experience that offers meaningful and practical work experience related to a student's field of study or career interest. It is an opportunity to apply knowledge gained in the classroom with practice in the field.
- e) Capstone Project:** A capstone project allows students to bring together the concepts, principles and methods that they have learned in their course of study and to apply their knowledge and acquired competencies to address the real world problems.

III: GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT:

Arts and Humanities: The purpose of introducing a course in the domain of Arts and Humanities is to familiarize students with key concepts in the disciplines such as Philosophy, History, Creative Arts, etc. These subjects enable students understand human experience, cultivate an appreciation of the past, enrich their capacity to meet the contemporary challenges in their lives, and enable their effective engagement with other cultures and civilizations. Thus, the focus remains on enabling critical examination of one's own self, promoting mutual respect and tolerance, instilling cultural pride and self-confidence, and supporting the development of clear and creative expression.

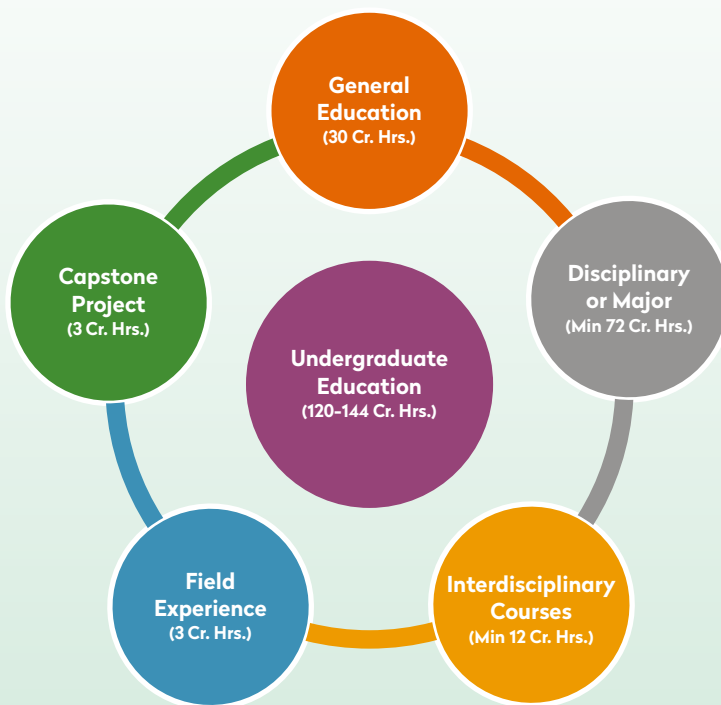


Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Undergraduate Degree Programs
(except for Associate Degrees)

Natural Sciences: A course in the domain of Natural Sciences is introduced with an aim to promote an understanding and appreciation of the physical and the natural world through observation and experimentation. Course within Natural Sciences familiarize students with the theoretical analyses, experimental methods, and pragmatic problem solving. The study of subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, Geology, Biology, Ecology, etc. helps students in developing their critical faculties as required to evaluate natural phenomena and to enable them appreciate the beauty of the natural and physical worlds often hidden from casual observation.

Social Sciences: A course in the domain of Social Sciences is introduced with an aim to provide students with an insight into individual and society. The study of subjects such as Anthropology, Economics, Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, Political Science, International Relations etc. equips students with fundamental knowledge required for an effective civic engagement.

Functional English and Expository Writing: The ability to communicate well is one of the essential skills of an educated person and is indispensable for professional success. The course of Functional English focuses on the basic aspects of the English language such as grammar, vocabulary and the use of English in its authentic context etc. Whereas, the course of Expository Writing is introduced with an aim to improve students' academic writing including technical and report writing skills etc.

Quantitative Reasoning: In the current times, an early exposure to quantitative reasoning has become essential for professional success in all fields. Two courses of Quantitative Reasoning are introduced to enable students make an effective use of quantitative information and to understand and evaluate data and reach valid conclusions in situations influenced by multiple factors.

Ideology and Constitution of Pakistan: This course is introduced to familiarize students with the historical events that shaped the ideology of Pakistan and to familiarize them with the core provisions of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan concerning the fundamental rights and responsibilities of Pakistani citizens.

Islamic Studies: A course of Islamic Studies provides students with a comprehensive overview of the fundamental aspects of Islam, its history, beliefs, practices, and influence on society and familiarize students with a solid foundation in understanding the religion of Islam from an academic and cultural perspective. Ethics, in integrated form will shape the core of the course to foster among students the universal ethical values promoted by Islam.

*** Alternatively, the university may offer a course on Theology/Religious Studies/Ethics for non-Muslim students without altering the prescribed credit hours for the course.**

Applications of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT): This course is introduced with an aim to provide students with a practical understanding of how information and communication technologies (ICT) are used in various fields and industries. The course covers such areas of knowledge within the application of ICT tools, software, and systems as to enhance productivity, communication, decision-making, and problem-solving across different domains. Through this course, students will be engaged in hands-on activities, projects and assignments to reinforce their understanding of ICT applications.

Entrepreneurship: This course aims to provide students with a basic understanding of the principles and practices of entrepreneurship. It also aims to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset and equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to start, manage, and grow their own ventures. Learning components of 'Financial Literacy' and 'Export Management' are also included in the learning outcomes of the course to provide students with a holistic understanding of business in priority areas of the economy.

Civics and Community Engagement: This course aims to bring responsible citizenship and active engagement between Universities/HEIs (through their students) and local communities. The course will provide students with a foundational understanding of the principles, institutions, and processes of civic engagement in a democratic society. Moreover, the course will build the capacity of students as leaders and influencers by gaining fundamental understanding of leadership, citizenship, communication, advocacy, network building as well as having first-hand experience of community development through volunteer works.

IV: STRUCTURE OF BACHELOR DEGREE PROGRAMS

Nomenclature of the Degree Programs: Universities may use either of the nomenclature i.e., Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Studies with an abbreviation of BS for undergraduate/ equivalent degree programs depending on nature of the program offered. Irrespectively, the nomenclature of the degree programs must be consistent with guidelines given in the National Qualification Framework (NQF).

Credit Hours: The standard range prescribed to qualify for the undergraduate/equivalent degree is 120-144 credit hours with a normal range of 15-18 credit hours in each semester. The university may however offer maximum of 21 credit hours in a semester where there is a program specific requirement of the same provided that the total number of credit hours for the undergraduate/equivalent degree program with a single major must not exceed beyond 144 credit hours. The range of credit hours for undergraduate/equivalent degree programs having different combinations of major(s) and minor(s) concentration must be followed as prescribed in this policy.

General Education Courses: All the undergraduate/equivalent degree programs shall be comprised of a mandatory set of 30 credit hours for general education courses as prescribed in this policy which must be covered in the first four semesters of the degree program.

Major Courses: These courses are specific to the main field of study in which the degree program is offered. The requirement to satisfy a single major is minimum of 72 credit hours for the undergraduate/equivalent degree program.

Interdisciplinary/Allied Courses: All the undergraduate/equivalent degree programs shall be comprised of a mandatory set of minimum 12 credit hours for interdisciplinary/allied courses. This is valid for all undergraduate/equivalent degree programs except for Associate Degrees, where the credit hours of interdisciplinary/allied courses may be less or more than 12 credits. It is also possible that an Associate Degree has no interdisciplinary or allied course.

Minor (Optional): Minor is an option comprises of secondary concentration of courses, ordinarily in an academic discipline that complements the major. The requirements and prerequisites for a minor shall be determined by the concerned department provided that a minor must not be less than 12 credit hours.

Offerings: An undergraduate/equivalent degree program may be offered with a number of combinations such as (I) a single major; (II) a single major with one minor; (III) a single major with two minors; or (IV) double majors without any minor. The structure of these combinations is given below:

- a. **Single Major:** An undergraduate/equivalent degree program with a single major is focused on one disciplinary specialization and comprises of a minimum of 120 credit hours including the requirements of field experience/internship and capstone project. The breakup of credit hours is as under:

- i. General education courses: 30 credit hours
- ii. Major: minimum 72 credit hours
- iii. Interdisciplinary/allied courses: minimum 12 credit hours
- iv. Field experience/internship: 03 credit hours
- v. Capstone project: 03 credit hours

b. Single Major with One Minor: An undergraduate/equivalent degree program with a single major and one minor is focused on one disciplinary specialization and one secondary but supporting concentration and comprises of a minimum of 132 credit hours including the requirements of field experience/internship and capstone project. The breakup of credit hours is as under:

- i. General education courses: 30 credit hours
- ii. Major: minimum 72 credit hours
- iii. Interdisciplinary/allied courses: minimum 12 credit hours
- iv. Minor: minimum 12 credit hours
- v. Field experience/internship: 03 credit hours
- vi. Capstone project: 03 credit hours

Note: Minor will be offered subject to the approval of the relevant statutory body upon the recommendation of the concerned department.

c. Single Major with Two Minors: An undergraduate/equivalent degree program with a single major and two minors is focused on one disciplinary specialization and two secondary but supporting concentrations and comprises of a minimum of 144 credit hours including the requirements of field experience/internship and capstone project. The breakup of credit hours is as under:

- i. General Education: 30 credit hours
- ii. Major: minimum 72 credit hours
- iii. Interdisciplinary/allied courses: minimum 12 credit hours
- iv. Minor 1: minimum 12 credit hours
- v. Minor 2: minimum 12 credit hours
- vi. Field experience/internship: 03 credit hours
- vii. Capstone project: 03 credit hours

Note: Minors will be offered subject to the approval of the relevant statutory body upon the recommendation of the concerned department.

d. Double Majors: An undergraduate/equivalent degree program with double majors without any minor is focused on two related or unrelated disciplinary specializations and comprises of a minimum of 192 credit hours including the requirements of field experience/ internship and capstone project. The breakup of credit hours is as under:

- i. General Education: 30 credit hours
- ii. Major 1: minimum 72 credit hours
- iii. Major 2: minimum 72 credit hours
- iv. Interdisciplinary/allied courses: minimum 12 credit hours
- v. Field experience/internship: 03 credit hours
- vi. Capstone project: 03 credit hours

Note: A second major will be offered subject to the approval of the relevant statutory body upon recommendation of the concerned department. Additional semester(s) will be required to complete the degree requirements in case two majors are offered provided that the total duration to complete the undergraduate/equivalent degree program does not go beyond the maximum duration prescribed in HEC semester guidelines. Where two majors have common courses, a student can get exemption for maximum of 30 credit hours for the second major, in which case, the minimum requirement to complete the degree program with double major shall be 162 credit hours including the requirements of field experience/ internship and capstone project.

Field Experience/Internship: The field experience of six to eight weeks (preferably undertaken during semester or summer break) must be graded by a faculty member in collaboration with the supervisor in the field. This is a mandatory degree award requirement of 3 credit hours for all undergraduate/equivalent degree programs. However for Associate Degrees, the requirement shall only be applicable where prescribed by the respective Accreditation Council, National Curriculum Review Committee or by the concerned university.

Capstone Project: A capstone project is multifaceted body of work that serves as a culminating academic and intellectual experience for students. The capstone project (preferably undertaken after the fourth semester) must be supervised and graded by a faculty member as per the protocols prescribed by the concerned department. This is a mandatory degree award requirement of 3 credit hours for all undergraduate/equivalent degree programs (except for Associate Degrees).

V: STRUCTURE OF ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

An Associate Degree is a two-year post higher secondary school certificate (HSSC) academic degree offered by the universities primarily in the market-driven subjects based on local and regional community and industry needs. The immediate link of the Associate Degree with the requirements of the market place is a core requirement of this program. An Associate Degree program is structured to be comprised of four regular semesters over a period of two years and consists of 60-72 credit hours. After completion of the Associate Degree, the qualification holder will have the option of seeking admission in the fifth semester of a relevant undergraduate/equivalent degree program through exemption of courses already studied in the Associate Degree. The courses to be exempted in this case shall be decided by the admitting university on case to case basis. The breakup of credit hours is as under:

- i. General Education: 30 credit hours
- ii. Major: 30-42 credit hours
- iii. Field experience/internship: Only applicable where prescribed by the respective Accreditation Council, National Curriculum Review Committee or the concerned university.

General Requirements for Launch of Associate Degree Programs:

- a) **Provision of Launch:** A university can offer Associate Degree programs in any field of study that is provisioned under its law i.e., Act, Charter and/or Statutes.
- b) **Seats of Offering:** A university may offer Associate Degree programs at its main seat, campuses and affiliated colleges (in case of a public sector university) provided that the seat of offering has an owning department duly accredited/approved by HEC.
- c) **Statutory Approval:** All Associate Degree programs must be approved by the relevant statutory body of the university, separately for each seat of offering.
- d) **Registration in Pakistan Qualification Register:** All Associate Degree programs must be registered by the concerned university in the Pakistan Qualification Register (PQR) as maintained by HEC.
- e) **Semester System:** All Associate Degree programs must be structured on the semester system of examination as per HEC guidelines issued in this regard from time to time.

Structure and Academic Requirements for Associate Degree Programs:

- a) **Credit Hours:** The standard range prescribed to qualify for the Associate Degree is 60-72 credit hours with a normal range of 15-18 credit hours in each semester. The university may however offer maximum of 21 credit hours in a semester where there is a program specific requirement of the same provided that the total number of credit hours for the Associate Degree program must not exceed beyond 72 credit hours.
- b) **General Education Courses:** All Associate Degree programs shall be comprised of a mandatory set of 30 credits hours for general education courses as prescribed in this policy.
- c) **Major Courses:** All Associate Degree programs shall be comprised of a mandatory set of 30-42 credit hours for major or disciplinary courses.
- d) **Field Experience/Internship:** The field experience of six to eight weeks (preferably undertaken during semester or summer break) must be graded by a faculty member in collaboration with the supervisor in the field. This requirement of 03 credit hours is applicable only in cases where the same is prescribed by the respective Accreditation Council, National Curriculum Review Committee or the concerned university. Where this requirement is prescribed, the courses within the major will comprise of 30-39 credit hours.

- e) **CGPA Requirement:** The minimum CGPA required for the award of Associate Degree program shall be 2.00 / 4.00. Universities may however set higher standard in this regard.
- f) **Program Duration:** The minimum and maximum duration to complete the Associate Degree program is four (04) and six (06) regular semesters, respectively. In extraordinary circumstances, and subject to approval of the concerned statutory body of the university, the maximum duration to complete the degree program may further be extended to another semester.

VI: ENTRY AND EXIT PROVISIONS:

Pathway for Associate Degrees Holders:

- a) Students having completed Associate Degrees shall be allowed admission in the fifth semester of the undergraduate/equivalent degree program offered in the same discipline without any deficiency course.
- b) Where the disciplines of the Associate Degree and the undergraduate/equivalent degree program are different, students shall be required to complete deficiency courses through a bridging semester before the fifth semester as determined by the admitting university.
- c) The minimum eligibility for admission in the fifth semester in above cases is 2.00/4.00 CGPA in the prior qualification i.e., Associate Degree. The admitting university may, however, set higher eligibility criteria for admission in the fifth semester of the four-year undergraduate/equivalent degree program.

Pathway for Conventional Two-Year BA/BSc/Equivalent Degree Holders:

- a) Students having completed conventional two-year BA/BSc/equivalent degree programs shall be allowed admission in the fifth semester of the undergraduate/equivalent degree program, in which case students shall be required to complete deficiency courses through a bridging semester before commencement of the fifth semester as determined by the admitting university.
- b) The minimum eligibility for admission in the fifth semester in this case is 45% cumulative score in the prior qualification i.e., conventional two-year BA/BSc/equivalent degree programs. The admitting university may however set higher eligibility criteria for admission in the fifth semester of the undergraduate/equivalent degree program.

Exiting from Undergraduate/Equivalent Degree Program with an Associate Degree:

Students enrolled in the undergraduate/equivalent degree program shall be allowed to exit from the program with an Associate Degree provided that the following requirements are met:

- a) The student must have completed minimum of 60 credit hours in at least four (04) semesters of the undergraduate/equivalent degree program including general education courses comprised of 30 credit hours;
- b) The minimum CGPA is maintained at 2.00/4.00;
- c) The name of the subject field on the degree shall remain the same in which a student was initially enrolled for the undergraduate/equivalent degree program;

- d) The case of exit from the undergraduate/equivalent degree program with an Associate Degree is approved by the concerned statutory body of the university.
- e) The option of exit in from the undergraduate/equivalent degree program with an Associate Degree is not allowed in disciplines accredited under the councils i.e. PM&DC, PNC, PVMC, PEC, PCP, PCATP, PBC, NTC, NCT, NAEAC and NCH.
- f) The option of exit from the undergraduate/equivalent degree program with an Associate Degree is allowed in disciplines accredited under the councils i.e. NCEAC, NBEAC and NACTE.

VII: MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Minimum Standards:

Guidelines prescribed under this policy are mandatory at minimum level. Universities may however set higher standards provided that the standards prescribed herein are not compromised except for guidelines where maximum ranges/limits are already prescribed in this policy.

Inclusion of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs):

MOOCs are available for any student who wishes to enroll in them. They provide an affordable and flexible way to learn new skills through delivery of quality educational experiences. The concerned university may endorse a list of MOOCs through its statutory body to enable the enrolled students get credits as prescribed by the concerned department.

Academic Advisement:

Academic advisement is an integral part of the undergraduate education. Universities are required to establish an effective Student Advisory System to ensure that the academic advice is available to every student, as and when needed. Through this system, information must be adequately made available on university profile and history, offered degree programs, courses, admission policy, degree completion requirements, university structure including faculties, departments, affiliated colleges and institutes, application processes, tuition fees, financial aids & scholarships, hostel/accommodation rules, student services, facilities and contact details. University shall also be required to address the key issues faced by students related to selection of major(s), minor(s), fulfilling requirements of interdisciplinary/allied courses, capstone project and field experience.

VIII: ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| AD: | Associate Degree |
| Gen Ed: | General Education |
| HEC: | Higher Education Commission |
| HEI: | Higher Education Institution (Universities, Institutes, or other Degree Awarding Institutions). |
| ICT: | Information and Communication Technologies |
| NACTE: | National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education |
| NAEAC: | National Agriculture Education Accreditation Council |
| NBEAC: | National Business Education Accreditation Council |
| NCEAC: | National Computing Education Accreditation Council |
| NCH: | National Council for Homoeopathy |
| NCT: | National Council for Tibb |
| NTC: | National Technology Council |
| PBC: | Pakistan Bar Council |
| PCATP: | Pakistan Council for Architects and Town Planners |
| PCP: | Pakistan Pharmacy Council |
| PEC: | Pakistan Engineering Council |
| PM&DC: | Pakistan Medical and Dental Council |
| PNC: | Pakistan Nursing Council |
| PVMC: | Pakistan Veterinary Medical Council |

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