DRAFT Report of the Planning and Priorities Working Group
Academic Plan action item #2
Community Consultation on Degree Structure February 24, 2012

We hosted a session during the Reading Week to discuss approaches to undergraduate degree structure, particularly in the BA but we hope with the potential to be extended further. The focus of the session was the four papers that had been circulated beforehand: 1) the foundation year; 2) a 1-2-1 model; 3) a 2+2 model; and 4) working with existing structure.

There was a pretty good turnout of approximately 35 people, and very good discussion. Each of the models garnered some attention, but the one described as 1-2-1 seemed to get the most positive feedback: it was seen as unique and therefore could contribute to VIU's niche programming; it would provide a first-year experience of some kind, and a capstone experience, but within the capstone the possibility of a honours option, a more applied option, experiential learning, and so on.

Some of the *caveats* that we heard or that were submitted in written form:

- adopting a single model might not be appropriate for all degrees, especially those with accreditation demands
- keep a first-year curriculum flexible
- work to make innovation (team teaching, for example) easier for faculty to undertake
- seek more input from students and the broader community

At the end, there seemed to emerge a few clear themes:

1) models that provide better student engagement are good, but we should keep students' options open
2) experiential learning is seen as a desirable component that we need to include more
3) inter- and multidisciplinarity are seen as positive approaches
4) VIU ought to look at developing learning outcomes for students, rather than try to decide upon a common curriculum
5) we ought to consider ways to involve "non-instructional" faculty in the student's learning – for example, if information literacy is an important learning outcome, how do we involve librarians in delivering that instruction?