
Guide to Themes

Bachelor of Integrated Studies

About Themes

Do you have an area of interest that you would like to focus on in your courses and program experiences? Would you like to explore an area of specialization that is not currently offered as part of another UFV major or minor program? Consider a Theme!

Themes are one of several avenues that BIS students can pursue that allow them to design their program to reflect their individual needs. Within a Theme, you can integrate upper-level courses from multiple disciplines in a custom-designed designation, one that reflects your career goals or personal or educational interests.

Q: What can I do my Theme in?

- You can choose to custom design your own Theme, in a unique subject area that will require courses from two or more disciplines.
- Students who are enrolled or have completed training in Aviation from Coastal Pacific can also pursue a designation in Professional Pilot Training--Fixed Wing.

Q: Are there some topics that are off-limits?

- Themes cannot duplicate existing degrees, majors, and minors. For instance, a BIS/BGS student cannot do a Theme in Global Development Studies, Psychology, or Agricultural Science. They can, however, use courses from these and other disciplines as part of another, more specialized area.

Q: What are some examples of Themes?

- Past and current students have built Themes in a wide diversity of areas, using courses and experiences offered across the institution and through transfer. Some examples?
 - Canadian Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Religious Studies, Studies of Aging, Gender Studies/ Gender and Society, Workplace Leadership, Livestock Handling and Science, Environmental Education, and more!

Do I have to do a Theme as part of my degree?

Nope! A Theme is exactly that—an option.

When can I apply for a Theme?

You can propose a Theme after completing 15 credits of university-level study or completion of a professional program through Applied and Technical Studies or Continuing Education.

What is expected of students completing a Theme?

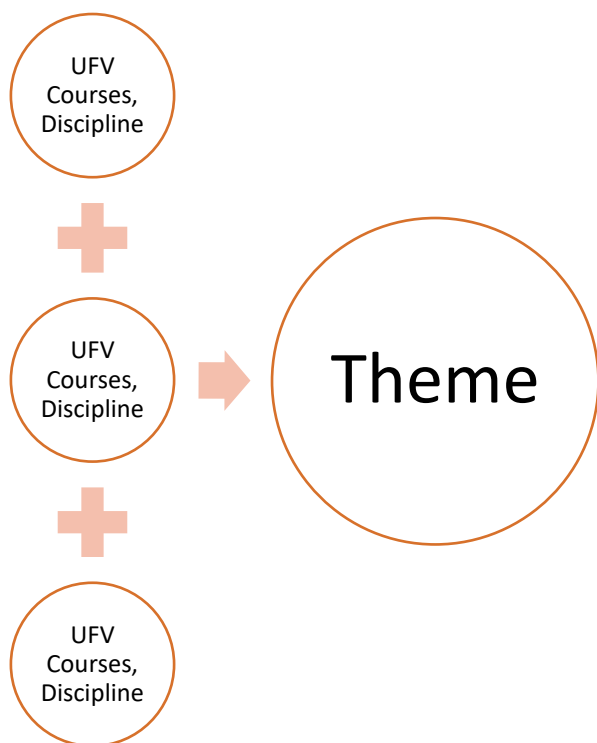
A Theme is more than just a cluster of complementary courses. A Theme is also a demonstration of a student's ability to identify learning goals, pursue strategies to meet these goals through specialization, and to draw connections between distinct areas of study. For students entering in Fall 2017 or later, the Theme will also build from the Portfolio developed as part of PORT 398 and PORT 399.

What are the requirements for a Theme?

- The Theme must include a minimum of 24 upper-level credits, with a residency requirement of a minimum of 12 upper-level credits completed at UFV.
- The Theme must draw upper-level courses from a minimum of two distinct disciplines.
 - Courses that are cross-listed will count as a single discipline. For instance, a Theme cannot use only courses in Anthropology and Latin American Studies if all of the courses are cross-listed between these two disciplines.
- The courses within the Theme should reflect whenever possible the most relevant ones offered at UFV for that area of study.
 - For instance, if a student designs a Theme in *Urban Studies*, they would need to complete a course in urban development (GEOG 344). Similarly, a Theme in *Non-Profit Organizations* would need to include a course in Non-Profit Management (BUS 204) and one in Advocacy Writing (CMNS 360).
- If developing a professionally-oriented Theme, e.g. in *Pre-Law*, the student should first review how this program of study is structured at other institutions, and what the expectations of professional programs are.
- A minimum 2.0 is required for all courses used in the Theme.

What can be included in a Theme?

There are as many different ways to build a Theme as there are areas of study!



OPTION 1

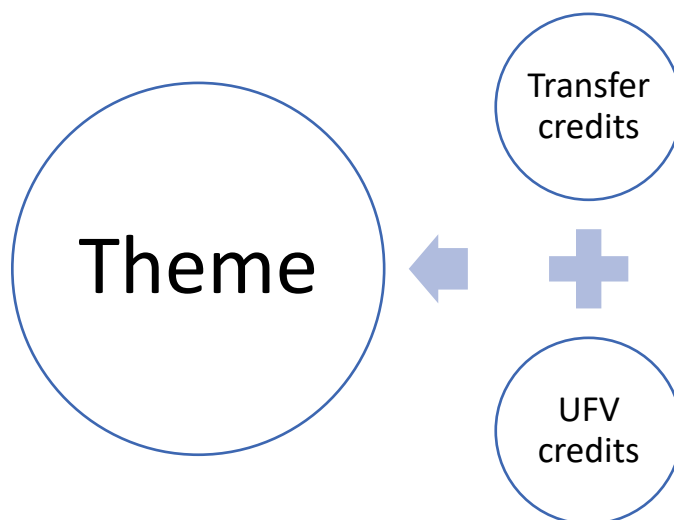
Most Themes are built using stand-alone courses offered in different disciplines and programs. For instance, students completing the **Childhood Studies Theme** can use upper-level UFV courses from:

Education
 +/- or
 English
 +/- or
 History
 +/- or
 Psychology
 +/- or
 Sociology

Planning early for a Theme is important, because it provides enough time to complete any necessary pre-requisite courses required for the upper-level courses.

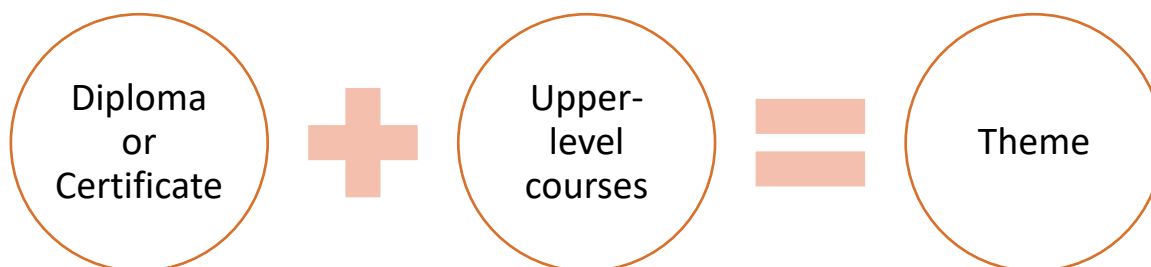
OPTION 2

Transfer courses can also form a part of a student's Theme. This pathway is an option for more than just transfer students. Students who start and end their programs at UFV may want to include courses completed at other institutions. Students spending a semester or two as part of the **Study Abroad** program (ufv.ca/international) may also want to build a Theme around coursework completed at the foreign institution.



OPTION 3

Students who have completed a certificate or diploma program prior to entering or during their BIS program may be able to incorporate elements from these programs into their Themes.

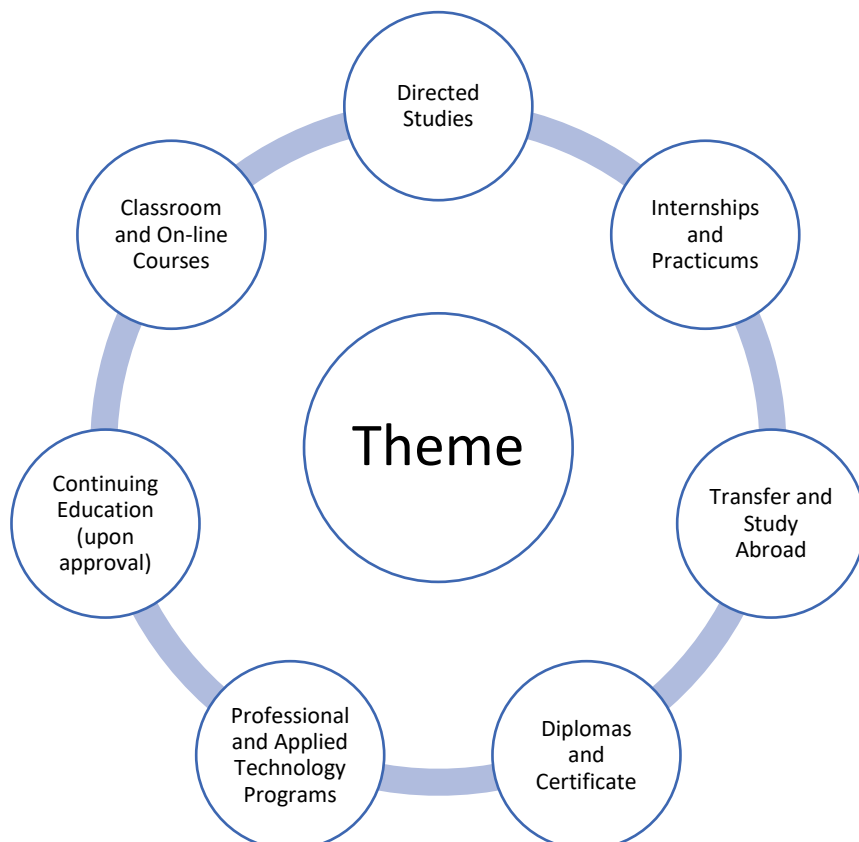


For instance, a Theme in **Agricultural Communications and Extension** could include:

Agriculture Technology Diploma + Communications + Biology + Adult Education + Geography

ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

Course and certificate-based options will form the foundation for a Theme, but there are multiple types of courses and certificates that can be used. Most of these will still have



disciplines attached. For instance, internships and practicums are usually specific to certain programs, as are Directed Studies.

When planning on using these types of experiences as part of the Theme, students should speak with potential faculty supervisors for these types of courses in advance of submitting Theme application forms.

For questions on Themes, contact: igs@ufv.ca, or book an appointment through Academic Advising, www.ufv.ca/advising

What happens when I complete my Theme proposal?

Proposals will be reviewed by the Program Advisor and the Program Chair. From there, the review process varies, depending on the nature of the Theme.

- If you are following an existing Theme developed by the Integrated and General Studies program, then the advisor and chair will be reviewing your current program to assess whether the requirements of the Theme can be met in the time that you have allocated for program completion.
- If you are proposing a new Theme, then your proposal will be assessed on the following criteria:
 1. Does your Theme name reflect the course mix that you have identified?
 2. Does the name or content of the Theme duplicate an existing degree, major, or minor program at UFV? Remember: Themes are unique and are not intended to replace a program offered elsewhere in the institution.
 3. Are your goals clearly identified, and are these reflected in the course selection?
 4. Is the mix of courses achievable in the time you have allotted for program completion? Have you identified pre-requisites, and allowed time to complete these?
 5. Are the courses you selected offered too infrequently to ensure completion? We recognize that you may not be aware of how frequently some courses are offered. We will provide suggestions for alternative courses or arrangements, whenever possible, if we see potential problems.
 6. Are the courses that you selected for your Theme the most relevant to the Theme?
 7. If this is a pre-professional or recognized area of focus, one that other universities commonly offer (e.g. pre-law, journalism, etc.), then does your Theme proposal reflect some of the common elements of these programs?
 8. Have you previously struggled in completing required elements or necessary pre-requisite courses that are needed for the Theme?

Your advisor and program chair will work with you to find the best mix of Theme course and program options. Please expect that some changes to your proposal may be needed as a condition of approval. Sometimes, the change is to the very name of the Theme!

Your proposal will be reviewed by the program chair and program advisor. More complex Themes and Themes that draw from uncommon courses or certificates may be referred to the Integrated and General Studies Program Committee for review and recommendation. The program chair may consult with faculty members within other program areas, if the proposed theme is one that overlaps heavily with those disciplines (e.g. Agriculture-related themes may involve consultation with Agriculture faculty, etc.).

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Please allow 3-5 weeks for proposal review and recommendation.

Can I change my Theme?

Yes! Your Theme is likely to undergo at least minor changes, as a result of course availability as well as changes to your own scheduling and program needs.

Simple changes to your Theme, such as substitution of elective courses, can be made at an advising appointment. (Note: some courses may be required for specific Theme.) More substantial changes, including to the name and direction of the Theme itself, *may* require a new proposal.

How will my Theme be recognized?

Your transcript will list your Theme under the name of the degree. The Theme will not show on your parchment. Parchments only show degree names, and no degree specializations, such as majors, minors, or Themes.

Can I complete a minor or minors as well as a Theme?

Yes. Any minor program should be distinct, however, from the Theme in name and content. In other words, a student cannot take an existing minor, add a couple of courses, and simply repackage it as a Theme. However, a student can use multiple courses within a minor program towards a unique Theme.

Students who are completing multiple minors will need to include courses from outside their minor programs into their Theme plan.

How do I submit my Theme proposal?

Send your proposal to: igs@ufv.ca. Be sure to label the file: Last Name Theme Proposal.

A Step-by-Step Plan for Completing your Theme Proposal

Review the information in this manual before starting your Theme, including the requirements for Themes on page 2. You'll likely have questions about course selection, theme development, etc., so be sure to make note of these as you're going along. You can then bring these questions to a meeting with the program advisor. Some other tips:

- Take the time to think about the questions, and **don't try to rush** the proposal development process.
- Have the following materials close by while you're developing your Theme proposal:
 - Your transcript(s)
 - The UFV Calendar

Ask us if you have questions. Book an advising appointment at www.ufv.ca/advising to review your Theme.

Section 1: Student Information

- For 'student email' that you enter in your UFV email address (@student.ufv.ca). This will be the email we will use to send program-related correspondence, except under exceptional circumstances.
- When checking how many credits you have, do not include those that you are enrolled in for the current semester.

Section 2: Proposed Theme Area

Provide a tentative name for your Theme. This name may change, once the proposal has been reviewed and the program of study refined.

When developing a name for your Theme, try to:

- Be more specific rather than too broad when possible. For instance, *Chinese Language and Culture Studies* is more specific than *Cultural Studies*.
- The Theme should 'make sense'. It's possible to have multiple interests in very different subjects, and it can be hard to marry these together as part of a single Theme.
 - For instance, a student may have training in Nursing, and may also enjoy taking courses in French. But do they make sense together as a Theme? In this case, a student may be able to create a Theme in *Cross-Cultural Health Studies*, and would complement the course in French and Nursing with courses in Sociology and Communications.

- **Purpose and Description:**

What is the purpose of your Theme? What would someone be expected to learn in this plan of study?

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Hint! Think of the question this way: if you were going to package this Theme and offer it to other students, what would you tell them is the reason they should take this specific Theme?

How encompassing is this Theme? The courses within a Theme cannot possibly cover all aspects of an area of study, so spend some time thinking about the limitations of your Theme. What are you not able to take classes in, either because UFV does not offer them or because of time constraints or because of some other limiting factor? A student interested in doing a *Canine Studies* Theme would find that they are not able to take a course at UFV specific to dog biology or genetics.

Hint! Do a Google search for programs with similar names or titles offered at other institutions. These programs can sometimes provide a 'blueprint' for designing your Theme.

Section 3: Goal Setting

What are you hoping to achieve from your Theme? This is a core component of your Theme plan. By identifying your learning goals, the program chair and program advisor are better able to assess whether or not the courses you choose are the best ones for your program of study.

In general, well-defined goals should be SMART:

S: Significant, Specific (well-defined, clear to others)

M: Meaningful, Measurable, and will Motivate you to continue forward

A: Achievable, Action-oriented

R: Realistic, Reasonable, Relevant to your life and plans, Rewarding

T: Time-based, i.e. what is the 'end date' by which you will have achieved your goal(s)?

Not all learning goals can be met through the Theme alone. Your Theme consists of 24 upper-level credits, and the BIS program requires 45 upper-level credits. That leaves lots of room in your program to take additional courses of interest to you, courses that may also help you reach your goals.

○ **Skills Development**

Your Theme will allow you to develop both content knowledge *and* increasingly specialized skills. What skills would you like to improve on through the courses in your Theme? Consider the diversity of possibilities, ranging from improved oral communications to specialized computer software use to qualitative research abilities to business planning.

Identifying the skills that you'd like to develop also means thinking beyond the Theme and the BIS. Are you planning on using the Theme to ladder into a career? If so, consider what skills you should work on before entering the labour market in this field. Are you developing the Theme as a pathway to further study, such as in Education? What skills do you need to build to help you succeed after you leave the BIS?

Section 4: Course Planning

Your courses should build from your goals and the skills you hope to develop. What programs or disciplines will help support you in doing so?

Review the UFV calendar for courses that may help you meet these goals. Make note of the pre-requisites for upper-level courses.

Hint! Map out a course progression that includes your pre-requisites. Keep in mind that 100- and 200-level courses typically run more frequently, including in summer term. It's a good idea to leave more time in your program progression to take the upper-level courses, because some courses may be offered every 18 to 24 months. If you are wanting to integrate an internship or directed studies course, you will need to leave extra time to do so as well.

Next: Assess where there are gaps between your learning goals and the courses you select. Are there ways to meet these goals within your program using transfer credits, Continuing Education programs, Cooperative Education, or other pathways? These options should be discussed with an advisor if they are needed.

It may be that your Theme is either too narrow or cannot be supported as defined. If that is the case, make an appointment to discuss potential options with the program chair (igs@ufv.ca) or program advisor (www.ufv.ca/advising).

Section 5: Additional Questions

The questions in this section are designed to assist with the advising and review process. Please let us know as well if you have questions about the Theme process or your proposal.

Submitting your proposal:

- Save your proposal as: Last Name Theme proposal
- Send to: igs@ufv.ca
- Please allow 3-5 weeks for review.

Rubric Used for Review of Themes. The rubric below is used by in assessing proposals for Themes. It is included here for reference purposes only.

| Criteria | Learning Goals | Theme Objectives | Theme Design | Course Selection | Achievability |
|---------------------|--|--|---|--|---|
| Exemplary | Student's goals for Themes are clearly developed and stated in measurable terms ¹ . | Individual learning goals well defined. All objectives reflect higher levels of achievement Themes be reached. | Theme broad enough so as to require a breadth of appropriate disciplines (4+) and topical input, and specific enough to support measurable learning goals. Theme is unique to UFV. | Theme incorporates those courses, from more than the minimum number of disciplines at the upper level, that <i>best</i> support the learning outcomes and content demands of the Theme. | Pre-requisites for Theme-courses are incorporated into the program plan. All transfer courses to be used in Theme have been articulated or confirmed by an academic advisor as ones that will be accepted. Student can complete Theme in a timely fashion. |
| Satisfactory | Student's goals for Theme completion are clearly developed, if not entirely measurable. | Individual learning goals reflect higher levels of achievement to be reached. | Theme uses at least 2 disciplines, with some topical variety, yet specific enough to support measurable goals; disciplines used are <i>most</i> appropriate. Theme is unique to UFV. | Theme incorporates those courses, from two disciplines at the upper level that well support the learning outcomes and content demands of the Theme. | Pre-requisites for Theme-courses incorporated into Theme plan. Most transfer courses that will be used in Theme have been articulated or confirmed by an academic advisor as ones that will be accepted. Can complete Theme in a timely fashion. |
| Developing | Student's goals for Themes are incompletely developed and/or are not stated in measurable terms. | <i>Some</i> learning goals reflect higher levels of achievement, but most reflect a level of achievement commensurate with lower-level learning. | Theme selection includes of 2 disciplines, but disciplines used are not the <i>most</i> appropriate for the topic. <i>Or</i> , Theme is too similar to a program offered at UFV but, based on course selection, can be redefined. | Theme utilizes some upper-level courses from 2 disciplines that support learning goals and name of Theme, but more appropriate courses needed. | Pre-requisites for Theme -identified courses partially built into plan. Transfer courses to be used in Theme not yet articulated or confirmed by an academic advisor as ones that will be accepted. Unlikely to complete Theme in time identified for graduation. |
| Undeveloped | Student's goals for Theme are poorly or incompletely developed. | Individual learning goals do not reflect a level of achievement commensurate with upper-level learning. | Theme does not use minimum of at least two <i>appropriate</i> disciplines. <i>Or</i> Theme duplicates a program offered elsewhere within UFV. | Theme does not include <u>upper-level</u> courses from 2+ disciplines that support Theme and goals; courses not appropriate to goals, topics, or are poor choices compared to other courses available. | Pre-requisites for Theme -identified courses not incorporated into Theme plan. Transfer courses to be used in Theme not articulated or confirmed by an academic advisor as ones that will be accepted. Cannot complete Theme in the time identified for graduation. |

¹ Theme goals *may* be measured in terms of: 1) time required/ schedule/ number of credits required for completion; 2) when relevant, target scores on specific tests relevant to student Theme learning goals (e.g. LSATs and pre-law); 3) competency in particular skills (e.g. oral communications); 4) completion of relevant applied experiences (e.g. practicum, Co-op) or credential (e.g. certificate).