Proposed Changes,
Honours Bachelor of Interpretation (ASL-English)
**Proposed Changes**  
Honours Bachelor of Interpretation (ASL-English)

### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item I: Reduction in Number of Liberal Studies Courses</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item II: Reduction in Number of Liberal Studies Courses in Bridge</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix: Proposed New Course List</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Introduction**

On 29 September 2015, George Brown College was granted consent to offer a Bachelor of Interpretation (American Sign Language—English) program. The degree launched in the following September and is due to welcome its third cohort in September 2018.

Now that there have been two cohorts of year 1 students, there has been cause for reflection among faculty regarding the language requirements of the program. In particular, questions have arisen regarding the rigour needed to prepare students to succeed in Interpretation of American Sign Language (ASL) and English.

**George Brown is seeking to**

i) reduce the number of non-core courses from eight to seven in order to increase ASL learning requirements and knowledge of Interpretation research and methods without pushing the overall number of program hours too high.

ii) reduce the number of non-core courses in the bridge pathway

**Program Abstract**

The Bachelor of Interpretation (ASL – English) responds to Canada’s immediate and growing demand for qualified Sign Language Interpreters. Employment opportunities for ASL-English Interpreters are growing as more Deaf persons enter Canada’s workforce in a range of professions. Demand for interpreters is also increasing in response to national and provincial legislation, including mandated implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

The program provides a sociolinguistic view of the Deaf community and includes translation and interpreting theory and practice, ethical foundations, cross-cultural awareness, communicative language development in American Sign Language (ASL) and English, service learning, and experiential learning opportunities. Students are encouraged to appreciate the many variables that influence language, including gender, ethnicity, race, social status, education, age, and bilingualism. Through field experience opportunities integrated throughout the program, students gain access to the Deaf community and culture, as well as acquire insights into features of spoken languages that are often taken for granted.

The combination of focused study in language and culture, with broad-based liberal studies courses, provides students with the cognitive framework and knowledge base needed to function successfully as interpreters. Through continued mastery of these skills, students also develop sustained powers of concentration, versatility in dealing with a variety of people and content areas, fast-thinking, and excellent communication skills in the respective languages.
**Item I: Reduction of Non-Core (Liberal Studies) Courses to Accommodate Expanded Language Learning and Interpretation Opportunities**

As the program was originally conceived and delivered, eight Liberal Studies courses (one per semester) accounted for 20% of the overall program (or 336 of 1680 total hours).

We propose eliminating one of the Liberal Studies courses from the Honours Bachelor of Interpretation (ASL-English) because of the increased number of program hours that need to be devoted to language learning and higher level Interpretation methodology in order for students to meet the degree’s outcomes.

The program is proposing the following changes:
- Subtract 3 hours per week (42 hours) by eliminating one liberal studies course
- Add 1 hour per week (14 hours) to BINT 1001 ASL I
- Add 1 hour per week (14 hours) to BINT 1101 ASL II
- Add 2 hours per week (28 hours) to BINT 4002 Interpreting IV
- Replace 3 hours per week (42 hours) of BINT 3103 Interpreting Interaction Community II with a new 3 hours per week (42 hours) course: Research into Interpreting Studies II (no course code assigned yet).

In essence, these changes amount to an additional 4 core hours per week (56 hours total) and the removal of 3 liberal studies hours per week (42 hours total) and therefore equates to an increase in 14 hours overall to 1694 total program hours. The number of liberal studies hours in this scenario equals 294 (7 courses) which changes the percentage of liberal studies to 17.5% of 1694 total program hours.

Interpreting requires many hours of applied, practical experience to master. Although we do not count the overall applied, practical hours in the program as program hours (since they are not easily classified as academic, degree-level hours), it is important to remember that from the students’ perspective, when it comes to the demands on their time and energy, program hours require additional commitment. Thus, let us not forget that in addition to the 1694 in-class program hours, the students in this degree also experience an additional 630 work integrated learning hours. That is a total of 2324 hours over the four years. That surpasses by over 300 hours George Brown’s fullest lab-heavy, applied degree (Bachelor of Commerce – Culinary Management) and surpasses by about 600 hours the remaining degrees at George Brown.

Benchmark 10 of the PEQAB Program Content standard generally requires that 20% of the total program be made up of non-core courses. However, in recognition that some programs involve more total hours PEQAB introduced a qualification to this 20% in a footnote that states “... undergraduate programs associated with accrediting bodies or other industry/professional regulatory bodies may depart from this norm, especially if meeting the 20% noncore benchmark would drive the total program to an extraordinary number of credit hours.” This is precisely the case here. Although Interpretation is a profession that requires certification, the certification bodies do not stipulate hours of ASL required in post-secondary programs. Thus, it
makes sense to compare the language requirements of other interpretation and translation programs to understand the standard and typical expectations for entry into and success in similar programs.

**ASL-English Interpreting Programs**

American Sign Language is among a very small number of languages that are unique in that few people grow up using it. There is no country, state, or province where one can be immersed in it and only students who are Deaf (and nowhere near all of those) will have received schooling in the language. Also, keeping in mind the differences between language usage and language study, for the very small percentage of the Canadian population who grew up immersed in ASL\(^1\) in their family unit and/or at one of the Provincial Schools for the Deaf, almost none of them will have *studied* ASL as a language, to say nothing of Canadians who use Quebec’s distinct sign language, *langue des signes québécoise*, or lsq.

Almost all first year students entering the Bachelor of Interpretation (ASL-English) will need not only to elevate their knowledge of English as a structured communication system (which most students will have studied to some degree) but will also need to elevate their knowledge of ASL as a language. It is because of this disparity in opportunities to learn and study ASL that interpretation programs across North America require the equivalent of about two years of ASL study before even considering students fully admitted into their interpretation programs.

For example, students entering the University of New Mexico’s Bachelor of Science in Signed Language Interpreting devote the **first two years (four semesters)** to signed language studies and the acquisition of American Sign Language. The last two years focus on interpreting, transliterating, and cultural studies.\(^2\) Similarly, Western Oregon University requires students to have at least WOU’s ASL level IX as a prerequisite before beginning the degree program which, according to the table below from their website, would be roughly equivalent to an early 3rd year (sophomore/junior) level.\(^3\)

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<tr>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>WINTER</th>
<th>SPRING</th>
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<td><em>Freshman Level</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ASL 101D: ASL I (4)</td>
<td>ASL 102D: ASL II (4)</td>
<td>ASL 103D: ASL III (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Freshman/Sophomore Level</em></td>
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<td>ASL 201D: ASL IV (4)</td>
<td>ASL 202D: ASL V (4)</td>
<td>ASL 203D: ASL VI (4)</td>
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\(^1\) With strong disclaimers as to the dependability and accuracy of any data…. the Canadian Association of the Deaf – Association des Sourds du Canada considers that there are approximately 357,000 profoundly deaf and deafened Canadians and possibly 3.21 million hard of hearing Canadians. [http://cad.ca/](http://cad.ca/)

\(^2\) [http://ling.unm.edu/signed-language-program/index.html](http://ling.unm.edu/signed-language-program/index.html)

\(^3\) [http://www.wou.edu/dsp/dsp-degrees-programs/program-information/course-of-study/](http://www.wou.edu/dsp/dsp-degrees-programs/program-information/course-of-study/)
Finally, University of Northern Colorado program’s curriculum focuses on developing students’ ASL and English skills in Year 1 and 2 and developing their interpreting skills in Year 3 and 4. Because the program requires students to be conversational in ASL at what UNC considers a level V (equivalent to four semesters of instruction in ASL), it screens admitted students for their proficiency in ASL before considering them eligible to begin the Interpreting curriculum.  

George Brown’s School of Deaf and Deafblind Studies screens applicants and accepts those with a basic ASL proficiency level equivalent to approximately 200 hours of ASL instruction and practical use. That is about the equivalent of five 42 hour undergraduate courses but in the majority of cases will not have matched the level of undergraduate language learning. Therefore, continued study of ASL is necessary throughout the four years of this degree.

Translation Programs:

Even translation programs in common, spoken languages, which do not face the same challenges as signed languages in terms of opportunities to learn, have strict language requirements. For example, the University of Toronto’s translation certificates in Arabic, Chinese, French, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, and Spanish all expect native or near-native ability in formal, written English and in the selected non-English language.

At Glendon College (York University) students entering the programs in the School of Translation must meet Glendon’s college-wide bilingual requirements.

The School of Translation and Interpretation (STI) at the University of Ottawa, one of the top translation and interpretation schools in the world, offers an Honours BA in French-English Translation and an Honours BA in French-Spanish-English Translation. The School’s website contains this caveat: Many applicants think that the ability to speak French and English is all that is needed to become a translator. Being bilingual is not enough: translators require an

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5 [https://learn.utoronto.ca/courses-programs/languages-translation/certificates/translation-into-japanese](https://learn.utoronto.ca/courses-programs/languages-translation/certificates/translation-into-japanese)
excellent command of their dominant language, must be able to identify themselves through this language and fully grasp both its stylistic and cultural resources.

Applicants are asked to summarize a French-language text in English. The exam, which according to STI’s website has only a 40% success rate, is designed to assess their command of English, its grammar and rules, the applicant’s ability to compose an articulate and coherent text in English, their comprehension in French and ability to synthesize the gist of the information into English.

Liberal Studies Outcomes in the Core Program
By looking at PEQAB Program Content Standard Benchmarks 6 and 7, the George Brown School of Deaf and Deafblind Studies demonstrates below that the removal of one liberal studies course in the program is balanced out by content and outcomes in the core curriculum that meet benchmarks about both generic, transversal skills and exposure to other disciplinary modes of inquiry.

PEQAB Program Content Standard Benchmark 6:

Given that the program is an honours baccalaureate degree specializing in language and communication in English and ASL, we can take it as a given that it meets most of sub benchmark A of Program Content standard 6 in that all the core courses contribute to the achievement of critical thinking and written and oral communication skills. Moreover, as we demonstrate below, the core courses in this program contain significant content and outcomes that also contribute to the achievement of the transversal outcomes in sub benchmark B: knowledge of society and culture and skills relevant to civic engagement.

| Course: Deaf Studies | Course Description: This course provides the opportunity to critically analyze historical worldwide events in the Deaf community. Emphasis is on society's view of Deaf persons as contrasted to Deaf persons' ideologies. Students engage in research on the impact of social-political and educational movements and examine current topics in Deaf education. | Course focuses on the views and experiences of Deaf persons themselves and how they have been treated by society at different points in time throughout history beginning in Greco Roman times to the present. Deaf culture is discussed through the eyes of the Deaf community. Audism, Oppression and stereotyping by the majority non-deaf society is discussed. This course provides students with a historical overview of Deaf persons and Deaf history in preparation for engagement with the Deaf community. Students are required to attend a Deaf community event during International Week of the Deaf and write a reflection. Students analyze important Deaf history events (such as banning the use of their natural language and ASL, forcing them to speak orally and lip read, banning Deaf persons from marrying other Deaf persons, not being... |

Knowledge of Society & Culture and Skills Relevant to Civic Engagement
allowed to socialize with other Deaf persons or attend Deaf schools) from a critique of power and dominance.

The debate assignment requires students to research opposing and conflicting perspectives and defend their viewpoints with appropriate research documentation and evidence.

| Course: Cross Cultural Studies | Course Description: Students explore different perspectives of culture, cultural values and identities to deconstruct prevalent assumptions and norms. With an emphasis on Deaf culture, students identify the elements of oppression, cultural conflicts and stereotypes associated with the Deaf community. Students examine different communication styles and their impact on intercultural communication. | This course focuses on how culture is defined and practiced by different persons and groups. Oppression, stereotypes, identity, intersectionality are explored and how cultural conflicts occur between persons of different cultures. Students are required to critically analyze their own culture and that of another culture to distinguish differences with the goal of becoming more respectful of other cultures. This supports students to recognize when and where cultural conflicts or communication breakdowns/misunderstandings can occur due to stereotypes, lack of knowledge or understanding of cultural beliefs which are different from their own. Students are required to interview a Deaf person to get their perspective on interpreters which allows students to see things from a Deaf person’s perspective. Reflections are an integral component of this course. The “cultural conflict role-play assignment” allows students to research, analyze and develop reasoning and logic as to the roots of cultural conflicts. Students present this role play in class in ASL, demonstrating the cultural conflict, its probable causes and reasons, and end with possible solutions followed by a class discussion. Learning about culture and cultural conflicts requires students to step out of their own comfort zone and explore other cultures, besides their own, including Deaf culture. Meeting and interviewing a Deaf person enables students to begin to engage with the Deaf community, establish a dialogue, learn the values and perspectives of Deaf persons themselves, with whom students will eventually work with. |
| Course: Service Learning | Course Description: Through research and collaboration | 1. Distinguish between service learning and volunteerism; advocacy and ally. |
with Deaf community organizations/agencies, students identify the needs of the Deaf community, develop a plan for service provision and perform a service which will further enhance the organization/agency’s mission and goals. As future practitioners in the Deaf community, students develop an understanding of civic responsibility and engagement and develop reciprocal, respectful and mutually rewarding partnerships with community members.

2. Identify the needs of the Deaf community through research, direct observation and face to face interaction with Deaf community member agencies and organizations.

3. Collaborate with Deaf community agencies/organizations to develop a service-learning plan to address agency/organization needs.

4. Perform a service-learning project within a selected Deaf community agency/organization that directly addresses agency/organization needs.

5. Reflect on the service activity to evaluate service provision, determine additional need, gain further understanding of enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

Perform a minimum of 30 hours of a service-learning project in the Deaf community; completed final evaluation.

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<tr>
<th>Course: Situated Learning</th>
<th>Course Description: Situated within experiential learning opportunities, students apply critical thinking skills with a peer to interpret interactions by assessing contextual factors and demands in order to support a meaning-based interpretation. Students are provided with opportunities to critically assess their formative live interpreting attempts through feedback from peers, interlocutors, faculty, and the opportunity to self-monitor in order to provide an effective summative interpretation at the end of the semester.</th>
<th>Students critically examine both ethical and professional expectations in relation to the sociolinguistic demands of various contexts.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Course: Senior Internship</td>
<td>Course Description: An internship placement with a professional interpreter in several contexts allows students to understand the opportunities and challenges of responding to the needs of a potential range of clients, including social service agencies, school boards, community agencies, and post-secondary institutions.</td>
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Students receive exposure to diverse populations within individual, family and community contexts. In addition, they are exposed to a wide range of community services through the different populations that are served within the interpreting field.

PEQAB Program Content Standard Benchmark 7:

Benchmark 7 of the Program Content standard requires the non-core curriculum to contribute to the achievement of
a) knowledge in at least two of the following:
   i) humanities
   ii) sciences
   iii) social sciences
   iv) global cultures (including Indigenous cultures)
   v) mathematics
b) more than introductory knowledge of the distinctive assumptions and modes of analysis of a discipline outside the core fields of study.

The non-core curriculum is not the only place that students will be exposed to knowledge in the areas listed in sub-benchmark a and the disciplinary assumptions of a discipline outside of the main field of study: Interpretation. There are three core courses that are particularly salient to the argument that core curriculum in this degree contributes to the achievement of knowledge in humanities, social sciences and global cultures as well as other disciplines. Those courses are Deaf Studies, Cross Cultural Studies and Interprofessional Education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge in Humanities, Social Sciences, Global Cultures</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Course:</strong> Deaf Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Description:</strong> This course provides the opportunity to critically analyze historical worldwide events in the Deaf community. Emphasis is on society’s view of Deaf persons as contrasted to Deaf persons’ ideologies. Students engage in research on the impact of social-political and educational movements and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course: Cross Cultural Studies</td>
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| Distinctive Assumptions and Modes of Analysis of a Discipline Outside Core Field | **Course:** Interpreting Interaction: IPE (Interprofessional Education)  
**Course Description:** This course provides students with the opportunity to apply interpreting theory to professional practice within simulated experiential learning opportunities with other emerging professionals. Students have the opportunity to work together to learn about, from, and with each other within simulated environments so that both sets of peers can apply theory to practice. Application of critical thinking skills while working with a peer interpreter, and peers of other programs, students assess the demands of contextual factors in order to support a meaning-based interpretation and students have the opportunity to  

The hallmark of IPE is the type of cognitive and behavioural change that occurs: *participants understand the core principles and concepts of each contributing discipline and are familiar with the basic language and mindsets of the various disciplines.* Prior to participating in IPE, students must have basic knowledge and skills related to their own profession. |
| Course: Deaf Studies | Course Description: This course provides the opportunity to critically analyze historical worldwide events in the Deaf community. Emphasis is on society’s view of Deaf persons as contrasted to Deaf persons’ ideologies. Students engage in research on the impact of social-political and educational movements and examine current topics in Deaf education. | As a discipline, Deaf Studies has grown from several exclusive small programs to a virtual powerhouse among several major universities in the United States and abroad. For the past two decades Deaf Studies has shifted from cultural reportage to the development of an established theoretical framework. Now a formalized discipline of study, Deaf Studies is a degree-granting discipline in which learners may receive a baccalaureate, master’s or terminal degree.⁷ |

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**Item II: Reduction of Non-Core (Liberal Studies) Courses in the Bridge Pathway**

In 2014, when we conducted the gap analysis for bridging graduates from related diploma programs, we identified knowledge and skill gaps in the practical and theoretical underpinnings of interpretation, sociolinguistics, American Sign Language (ASL), and baccalaureate-level writing and research. Diploma graduates, both those from 2-year programs and those from 3-year programs will lack some knowledge in more sophisticated development of academic research questions, sustaining analytical discussions, research methodologies, and theory. The bridge courses remedy these gaps.

As originally planned, to bridge into the program, students would complete 3 core courses:
- Introduction to Research
- Interpreting Strategies
- ASL Bridge Course

In addition, they would complete enough liberal studies to “catch up” with students who began the program in year one.

After completing the bridge, students coming from two-year diplomas enter semester 5 of the degree and students coming from three-year programs enter semester 7. Students bridging into semester 5 will have general education credits from their prior post-secondary programs and will take a total of 4 liberal studies courses in the remaining 4 semesters of their degree. Students bridging into semester 7 will also have general education credits from their prior post-secondary programs (between 2 and 4 courses, depending on the program) and will take a total of 2 liberal studies courses in the remaining 2 semesters of their degree.

It is our position that, in the spirit of recognizing prior learning—the spirit in which gap analyses and bridge pathways for core curriculum are designed—students bridging out of diplomas and into degrees should be able to take only one non-core course to make up for the non-core courses they would have missed. They will have already met the requirements for entry into a degree program in Interpretation so we can safely assume they are ready for degree level study, critical thinking and communication. Moreover, they will come with some general education credits that will have exposed them to the modes of assumption and methods of inquiry of at least another discipline.
**Appendix I: Updated Course Schedule** Should PEQAB support the elimination of one liberal studies course we propose the following revised course of study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year One: Fall Semester 1</th>
<th>Year One: Winter Semester 2</th>
<th>Year Two: Fall Semester 3</th>
<th>Year Two: Winter Semester 4</th>
<th>Year three: Fall Semester 5</th>
<th>Year three: Winter Semester 6</th>
<th>Year three: Spring May &amp; June</th>
<th>Year four: Fall Semester 7</th>
<th>Year four: Winter Semester 8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Sign Language I</td>
<td>American Sign Language II</td>
<td>ASL Spring Intensive</td>
<td>American Sign Language III</td>
<td>ASL Spring Intensive</td>
<td>American Sign Language IV</td>
<td>Dynamics in the Deaf Community</td>
<td>Senior Internship</td>
<td>American Sign Language VI</td>
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<tr>
<td>BINT 1001 6 hours (2 sections)</td>
<td>BINT 1101 6 hours (2 sections)</td>
<td>4 hours (2 sections)</td>
<td>BINT 2001 4 hours</td>
<td>BINT 2101 ASL Spring Intensive</td>
<td>BINT 2001 4 hours</td>
<td>Contrastive Analysis BINT 3101 2 hours</td>
<td>BINT 4001 3 hours</td>
<td>BINT 4001 3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deaf Studies BINT 1002</td>
<td>Cross-cultural Studies BINT 1102</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Interpreting I BINT 2102 5 hours (Team taught)</td>
<td>Interpreting II BINT 3002 4 hours (Team taught)</td>
<td>Interpreting III BINT 3102 4 hours (Team taught)</td>
<td>Translation and Discourse Analysis II BINT 3104 4 hours</td>
<td>Interpreting IV BINT 4002 6 hours (Team taught)</td>
<td>Research in Interpreting Studies II BINT 3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Communication for Interpreters BINT 1003 3 hours</td>
<td>Cognitive Processing skills BINT 1103 4 hours (2 sections)</td>
<td>3 hours (co-taught)</td>
<td>Interpreting Essentials BINT 2103 3 hours</td>
<td>Interpreting Interaction: Community II BINT 3003 4 hours (Team taught)</td>
<td>Interpreting Interaction: IPE BINT 4003 3 hours (Team taught)</td>
<td>Interpreting and Technology BINT 4101 4 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to the Interpreting Profession BIINT 1004 2 hours</td>
<td>Introduction to Translation &amp; Discourse Analysis BINT 2005 2 hours</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Service Learning BINT 2104 2 hours</td>
<td>Interpreting Practicum Seminar I BINT 3004 2 hours</td>
<td>Interpreting Practicum Seminar II BINT 4103 2 hours</td>
<td>Research in Interpreting Studies I BINT 4004 6 hours</td>
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<td>Liberal Studies 3 hours</td>
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<td>4 courses 13 hours</td>
<td>4 courses 15 hours</td>
<td>6 courses 17 hours</td>
<td>6 courses 22 hours</td>
<td>6 courses 19 hours</td>
<td>6 courses 19 hours</td>
<td>5 courses 23 hours</td>
<td>4 courses 15 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>182 hours throughout semester</td>
<td>210 hours throughout semester</td>
<td>238 hours throughout semester</td>
<td>238 + 70 field hours throughout semester</td>
<td>239 + 70 hours field throughout semester</td>
<td>196 + 70 field hours throughout semester</td>
<td>182 hours throughout semester</td>
<td>210 hours throughout semester</td>
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