Frequently Asked Questions: School of ATEC Changes

Classes:

1. I’m having issues finding classes I need for my degree requirements. What should I do?
   a. Almost all ATEC and EMAC prefix classes are listed under the new ATCM prefix starting in Fall 2017. Course numbers and some course names have changed as well. Use the ATCM Conversion Guide that has been emailed out to find the ATCM equivalents for your degree requirements.
   b. Another 20-30 sections of courses, all upper-level, will be appearing on CourseBook and Orion shortly. If a course is not being offered, reach out to faculty to see if they’d be willing to offer an independent study option instead.

2. Why can’t I register for a course I know I’ve taken the prerequisites for?
   a. Orion is currently having issues recognizing the ATEC equivalents to certain ATCM prerequisites. If you are having difficulties registering for a class you’ve taken the prerequisites for, contact your advisor to be registered for the course.

3. Why are there so many Freshman Seminar courses offered under the ATCM prefix?
   a. It may seem like ATCM 1100 (Freshman Seminar) has quite a lot of sections; however, this is artificially inflated. It looks like there are more sections offered because there are smaller co-requisite discussion sections attached to each lecture section. Only three faculty members will be teaching the lecture sections; TAs will teach discussion sections.

4. I can’t find classes that fulfill my EMAC degree requirements. What should I do?
   a. There are many more EMAC degree requirements in the process of being posted on CourseBook and Orion for the Fall 2017 semester. ATEC Associate Dean of Academic Administration, Lisa Bell, will send out an email to all undergraduate School of ATEC students once the new classes have been posted.

5. I can’t find any sound design classes other than the introductory sound course. Why is that?
   a. The sound design curriculum as a whole is being restructured. Sound design is critical for any program that involves media creation, web design, animation, and games, so sound courses will continue to be offered through the ATEC program.
   b. The School of ATEC is also bringing on board new faculty, including within the sound design realm. Some faculty will not be returning for the 2017-2018 academic year. However, this should not limit students’ access to sound studios. Faculty are working to find a solution for students being able to access the sound studios.

6. I’ve heard rumors that the production-based games courses are being eliminated. Is that true?
   a. No. Also, Games & Narrative, Level Design, Game Design courses are all still being offered through the School of ATEC. Level Design II will be offered this Fall, though it is one of a number of courses still in the process of being posted.

7. Why do some ATCM classes not have faculty assigned yet?
   a. The School of ATEC is in the process of hiring quite a few new faculty members for the 2017-2018 academic year. Not all faculty have been assigned yet because the faculty searches are still in progress.

8. Will there still be Topics classes offered in Fall 2017?
   a. There will be at least one Topics in Games course and one Topics in Animation course offered this Fall 2017. Once the course information is available, the information will be distributed to School of ATEC students via email.
9. Why are there certain classes that are available for only a limited time? These classes are marked by an asterisk in the ATCM Conversion Guide.
   a. There are a few courses listed with an asterisk in the ATCM Conversion Guide. These courses are changing from either lower-level to upper-level courses or vice versa. Because of this, the courses will continue to be offered in their current levels as ATEC or EMAC prefix courses for at least 3 semesters.

10. Can any of the new courses be used to fulfill degree requirements on previous degree plans?
   a. Yes, certain new courses may be approved to count as Prescribed Electives. Contact your advisor if you are interested in using a new course as a Prescribed Elective.

Degree Plan Changes:

1. Will I be forced to move to the new degree plan?
   a. No. Current students will not be forced to move to the new degree plan. However, if you feel the new degree plan and pathways may be a better fit for you, contact your academic advisor to see how that may affect your graduation timeline. If you decide to stay on your current catalog, you will not be required to go through the portfolio process. Your degree requirements will remain the same, and you would graduate with your respective degree, “Arts and Technology” or “Emerging Media and Communication”. If you decide to switch to the new degree plan, you will have to go through the portfolio review process.

2. What are the benefits of the new degree plan structuring beginning in Fall 2017?
   a. Under the new degree plan structure, the degree program offered will be a Bachelor of Arts in Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication (ATEC). Within the ATEC major, there will be five pathways offered: Animation, Mediated Communication, Design & Production, Games, and Critical Media Studies.
   b. The pathways provide students with more direction on how to move through the degree based on different interest areas. To be accepted into a pathway, students will go through a portfolio review process. This process will help to better equip students with more practical skills as they move through the program and will ensure they graduate with the knowledge and experience necessary to succeed.
   c. The specific pathway a student pursues will be included on their degree diploma when they graduate. Therefore, instead of having only “Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication” listed, it will also say, for example, “Animation pathway,” if a student were to graduate from that pathway.

3. Why did the School decide to use pathways instead of separate majors for the degree restructuring?
   a. The School of ATEC is not yet ready to split into different majors. While the School is growing quickly, it is still one of the smallest schools on campus. In the future, the School may eventually look to add a Bachelor of Science degree. Additionally, since UTD does not have an admissions process at the School level, the portfolio review process allows for an assessment and critique of skills before students can move further in the degree plan.

4. What will the portfolio review process look like for the 2017 ATEC degree pathways?
   a. Over the summer, the Undergraduate Studies Committee will be discussing and finalizing the portfolio review process. The portfolio requirements may look different across the different pathways. This information will be disseminated to undergraduate students in Fall 2017. It will be at least one semester before anyone will need to go through the portfolio review; Spring 2018 will be the earliest portfolio review.

5. Can I find more information about the pathways online?
   a. Not currently. We cannot disseminate information about the new ATEC restructuring until we receive final approval by the state. Once approved, information on the different pathways will be posted on the School of ATEC website. In the meantime, visit your advisor for more information to discuss the new pathways and their requirements.
6. **Will it still be an option to combine interest areas within ATEC?**
   a. Yes. The flexibility that exists currently will still exist. The pathways are a way to provide more direction for students to pursue their interest areas. Students will not be prevented from crossing over disciplines. For example, Games pathway students can still take design courses, and they will satisfy requirements on their degree plan, if only as an upper-level free elective.

7. **What will the Computer Science requirements look like in the new degree plan?**
   a. Every pathway will require up to CS 1335 (Computer Science I for non-majors). Some pathways will require further CS courses. Prerequisites will be added to certain ATEC courses to encourage students to take the CS courses earlier in the degree progression and utilize these skills in their ATEC courses.
   b. The School of ATEC is working with the Computer Science department to restructure and/or redesign the current CS courses. Because they are housed in the CS department, the School of ATEC has little control over what is taught. ATEC is looking at offering more internal programming-based courses, in addition to the Tools Development, Pipeline Development, and Scripting for Games courses.

8. **How will the upcoming changes within the School of ATEC affect students interested in a double-major or double-degree?**
   a. Students who are interested in adding ATEC as a double-major or double-degree are still able to do so, if they’d like. They will still need to go through the portfolio review process after at least 1 semester within the program.

9. **What is the reasoning behind all these changes?**
   a. Early on in the ATEC and EMAC programs, it was very easy for students to pick mostly classes at the introductory level and graduate without getting further into some of the higher-level courses. This allowed students to graduate without achieving the depth of experience and knowledge necessary to be successful following graduation. The changes to this pathway and portfolio review system should remedy this.
   b. The School of ATEC is one of the only schools with production fields without a portfolio review, audition, or entrance exam required at the freshman level. By adding in a portfolio review process, the School will raise the bar on classes and offerings for students and adds in a benchmark for students to aim for. The way to improve the quality of the degree is by improving what students learn during their time here and go on to accomplish after graduating.
   c. The goal for the new degree plan structure is to make it possible for students to have the skills and experience necessary to move directly into production jobs after graduation, if that’s their goal.
   d. The School constantly reevaluates course content to ensure that students are being taught what they need to get into the jobs they’re looking for. Connections with outside industry professionals and companies are key in this evaluation process and may create connections for possible student internships in the future.
   e. While it may seem like a substantial amount of change, there are actually a number of things remaining the same. A number of the foundational courses for the program are still the same. Production-related courses are not being eliminated. Most of the changes are focused on restructuring how courses are organized and packaged into pathways.

10. **When will the new degree plan changes be approved?**
    a. We are hopeful that the approval process will be concluded and approved well before the Fall 2017 semester begins. This approval is for the new degree structuring, not for the prefix changes. If the changes are not approved, ATCM classes will still be offered. The Chancellor’s Board next meets in late May, so that would be the earliest that we would find out whether the degree changes have been approved.
11. What are the changes coming for the graduate programs?
   a. The graduate programs will also be set up with a pathway structure and will also allow flexibility to take courses in multiple areas. These changes are still ongoing.

Additional Questions:

1. How will the changes affect ATEC-related student organizations?
   a. The School of ATEC is currently looking at determining specific people who will be responsible for working with student organizations in a more organized manner.
   b. If your student organization is relevant to ATEC interests, contact your advisor to have your student organization plugged during Freshman and Transfer Orientations.
   c. There is a push to foster dissemination of information in the ATC Building, especially for student organizations. The Exhibition Committee is analyzing uses of the ATC building and how information can best be presented throughout the building. The committee is creating signage plans to improve information provided throughout the building. They are also discussing areas where public information can be shared, whether it be through monitors, bulletin boards, etc.

2. Will students have access to the Games and Media Library?
   a. The Games and Media Library will be more firmly established in the Fall 2017 semester. It is currently open but not all events and activities are in place yet. There will be hours dedicated to student use.

3. Will there be any new opportunities to showcase student work and achievement?
   a. As mentioned in the answer to Question 1, there is a committee working to determine where and how information can be shared throughout the ATC building, including student work. The plan is to have spaces for both physical art exhibition and digital art exhibition. Current EMAC students have an event called Capstone Celebration at the end of each semester to present all Capstones from the current semester. The School is planning to turn this event into one for all interest areas within the School of ATEC.

4. Why are some faculty not returning for the 2017-2018 academic year?
   a. Several faculty will not be returning for the 2017-2018 academic year. As part of the curriculum revision process that has culminated in the 2017 degree changes, there has been an audit to match the levels of curriculum with levels of expertise to ensure that faculty teaching each class have the expertise to match. There are currently 7 tenure-track faculty searches and 12 non-tenure-track faculty searches in progress. There are open searches in both games and animation seeking production experience, critical media studies, mediated communication, project management, and sound design.

5. Are new faculty hires going to bring in industry experience?
   a. Yes. Industry experience is a priority in faculty candidates in addition to having academic credentials that allow them to teach at the university level. Recent developments at the university level in creating the “Professor of Practice” title are making it less difficult to bring in faculty who may have substantial experience in the industry but lack a terminal degree in their field.

If you have additional questions about classes, degree plan changes, etc., please contact your academic advisor.