

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY
Update on the Lower-Division Writing and College Core Course Requirements

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

The Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) has been considering changes to the lower-division writing and college core course curriculum and requirements. During the past four years, CEP participated in an external review of the Writing Program. We reviewed a recent survey of the core course lecturers and assessments of the Crown model, the core courses at Colleges 9 and 10, and the Multilingual Curriculum for international students. At the request of the Council of Provosts, we provided feedback on several options for revising the college course courses. Members of CEP also met with faculty and advisors in the School of Engineering and the Arts, Humanities, Physical and Biological Sciences and Social Sciences to discuss the lower-division writing requirements and their relationship to the core courses. We have also consulted extensively with the provosts, as well as other senate committees and the administration. As described below, these discussions raised serious concerns about the structure and effectiveness of our lower-division writing and core course curriculum. In this report, we present our recommendations for addressing these concerns.

The campus writing requirements consist of the Entry-Level Writing Requirement (ELWR), the lower-division Composition 1 and 2 (C1 and C2) requirements and the upper-division Disciplinary Communication (DC) requirement. In 2005, the C1 and C2 requirements were partially integrated with the required college core courses. Most freshmen now satisfy C1 by taking an 80A or 80C/D college core course or, in the case of most international students, Writing 1; students satisfy C2 by passing either an 80B college core course or Writing 2. In addition to providing instruction in writing, the core courses help students transition to college and serve an important community-building role.

Although the linkage of the core and lower-division writing requirements resulted in significant cost savings, it has not served our students well over the past decade. Due to the linkage of the core and writing requirements, the majority of freshmen must take a composition course in their first quarter, even if they have not satisfied ELWR. After completing – and usually passing – a core course that fulfills the C1 requirement, a surprising number of these students are still unable to satisfy ELWR. This raised serious concerns about the quality and rigor of the writing instruction in college core courses¹.

In 2015, CEP concluded that the satisfaction of ELWR should be a prerequisite for enrolling in a composition (C1) course, as is required at every other UC campus. This change – and the modification of SCR 10.5.2 required to implement it – were approved by the Senate on May 18, 2016 and will go into effect in the fall of 2017².

CEP also believes that the extraordinary complexity of the college core and lower-division writing course sequences is having a negative impact on many students. The pathway by which a student satisfies the ELWR, core, C1 and C2 requirements is determined by their writing proficiency, visa status and college. The number of courses and credits required to satisfy the requirements ranges from 1 to 6 courses and 5 to 30 credits, not including additional courses required by some colleges. As a result, ELWR-required students often find it difficult to satisfy other GE requirements; address potential deficiencies in

¹ Additional information about these concerns can be found at http://senate.ucsc.edu/committees/cep-committee-on-educational-policy/reports-and-presentations/Senate_Meeting_OverviewUCSCwritingrequirementsandMLC.pdf

² http://senate.ucsc.edu/senate-meetings/agendas-minutes/2015-2016/2016-May-18-Meeting/1831%20-%20CEP_Reg_10.5.2Amendment_Proposal_Spring16fin.docx.pdf

mathematics; take foundational courses required for their intended major; or explore other interests. Many departments do not appear to be taking these challenges into account when developing advising plans for their students.

In January of 2016, the Council of Provosts solicited feedback from CEP and the Committee on Planning and Budget (CPB) on several models for revising the college core courses and their relationship to the lower-division writing requirements. Both CEP and CPB strongly favored a straightforward model that would separate the lower-division writing requirements from core, thus allowing them to focus on distinct learning outcomes. Under this model, no student would be required to take a C1 course before satisfying ELWR. The segregation of students into different offerings of core based on their writing abilities would be eliminated, thus enhancing the community-building aspect of the core courses. Finally, the standardization of the writing and core requirements across the colleges would simplify advising and academic planning.

After considering our feedback, the Council of Provosts submitted a revised proposal for Senate review in May of 2016. Unfortunately, there was not sufficient time to obtain decanal feedback on the proposal and its financial viability. To avoid further delays, we reviewed the proposal and made the following decisions about aspects of the proposal under the purview of our committee:

- 1) Core must be separated from the lower-division writing requirements, including C1, C2 and the courses that help students satisfy ELWR. The writing courses should be administered and taught by the Writing Program, not the Colleges. These courses must focus on making writing outcomes their priority.
- 2) CEP continues to support the college core course requirement. The core requirement should be limited to the fall quarter of the freshman year, with the size and number of associated credits determined by the educational objectives of the course and available funding.
- 3) CEP does not support the mandatory linkage of the lower-division writing courses to a specific topic (e.g. the college themes) or quarter (winter of the first year). We believe that students should have more flexibility in the scheduling and theme(s) of their composition courses. To the extent possible, students should be given the opportunity to take a C1 or C2 course related to the theme of their college during the winter if they wish to do so.

A chart showing the revised structure of the pathways by which students will satisfy ELWR, the college core requirement, and the C1 and C2 requirements after this year is shown at the end of this report.

Remaining issues that need to be addressed

1. Fiscal considerations

A significant investment will be required to separate the lower-division writing requirements from the college core courses. At present, more than 60% of freshmen satisfy either C1 or C2 via their college core course. Separating C1 and C2 from core will require these students to take an additional course. CEP feels this is necessary given the importance of writing in our students' education. If the campus lacks the financial resources to support independent writing and core courses, it may be necessary to increase the size of the core courses or reduce the number of credits associated with these courses. At the time this report was submitted, the estimated cost of separating writing from core had not been provided to CEP or other Senate committees.

2. Organization and goals of the College 1 courses

According to a recent proposal from the Council of Provosts, the College 1 courses should focus on the development of critical reading skills in the context of the college theme³. They would like these courses to carry 5 credits and be limited to 30 students. Even if the campus is willing to provide the resources required to support this proposal, CEP is reluctant to ask students to satisfy another 5 credit requirement during their first year. This concern could be addressed by making College 1 a 2 credit course or requiring it to carry an existing GE designation.

3. Fate of the Multilingual Curriculum for International Students (MLC)

In the Spring of 2015, CEP approved a sequence of writing courses (Writ 24-27) designed for students with F1 visas who have not satisfied ELWR. Due to the lack of information about the cost of the program, CEP approved the MLC for only two years, with its extension beyond the current academic year dependent on information about the effectiveness of the program and its cost. Furthermore, both CEP and CPB feel that the extension of this program should only be considered in the context of ongoing discussions about the writing and core course curriculum for domestic students who have not satisfied ELWR, including California residents whose first language is not English.

4. Timetable for implementation

As of next fall, students must satisfy ELWR before attempting a C1 course. Unfortunately, the lack of information about the cost of separating the core and writing requirements has delayed progress toward achieving this goal. CEP is extremely concerned by the continuing delays. Recent meetings with divisional faculty revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the writing abilities of their majors. Indeed, more than 5% of the students who entered as freshmen in the fall of 2015 took at least three quarters to satisfy ELWR⁴; this cohort was highly enriched in first generation and Hispanic/Latino students (72.3% and 46%, respectively compared to only 7.6% white students). 80% of the students did not speak English as their first language. Further delays in implementing changes to the core and lower-division writing curriculum will have a disproportionate impact on students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and traditionally underrepresented groups. We are therefore eager to implement our recommendations as soon as possible.

We look forward to discussing these issues with you at the winter senate meeting.

Respectfully submitted;
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³ At the time this report was written, a formal proposal for revising the core courses including budgetary projections and decanal feedback had not been submitted.

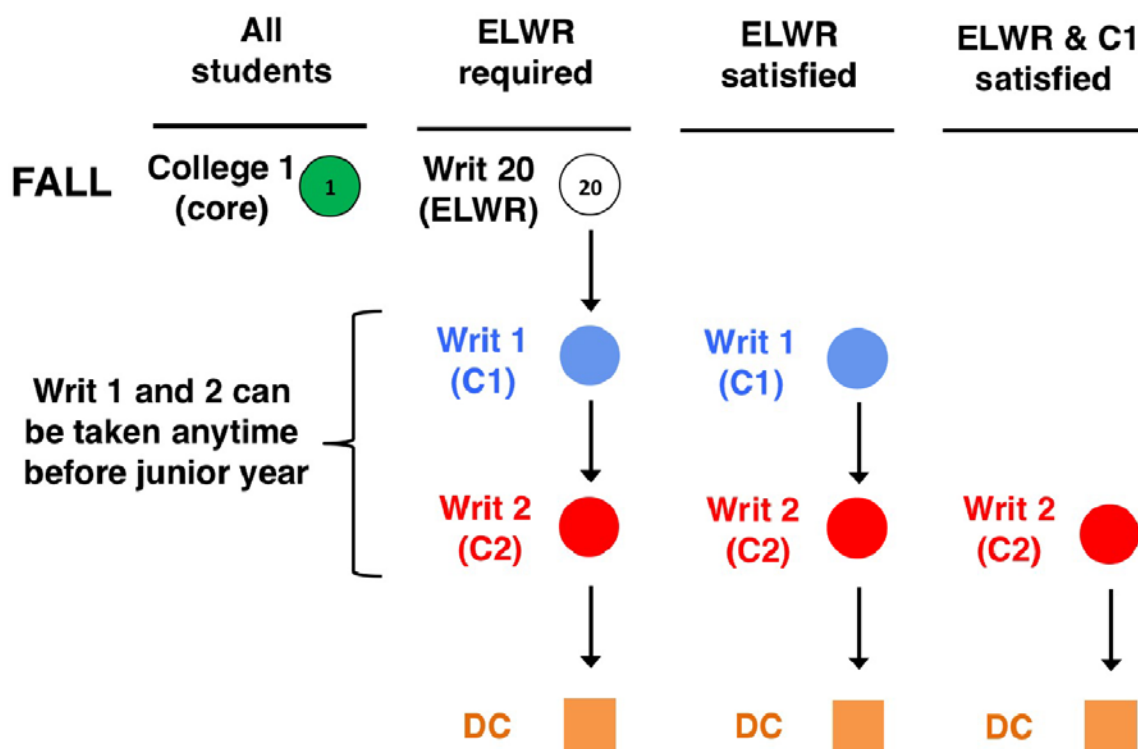
⁴ ~260 students were enrolled in the spring 2016 offering of Writing 21, which is restricted to students who have not satisfied ELWR. Note that this does not include the 86 international students in the Multilingual Curriculum who did not satisfy ELWR before the spring term.

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APPENDIX A

Revised pathways for satisfying ELWR and the College Core and C1 and C2 Writing Requirements



All incoming students will satisfy the core requirement by taking College 1 during the fall of the freshman year. ELWR required students will also take a Writing 20 course during their first quarter and each subsequent quarter until they satisfy ELWR. C1 and C2 will be satisfied by the completion of Writ 1 and Writ 2, respectively. Arrows indicate course pre-requisites. Note that Writ 1 and Writ 2 can be taken any quarter, providing additional scheduling flexibility for students. Writ 2 is a prerequisite for all DC courses and must be completed by the end of the sophomore year. Proposals for the College 1 courses have not been submitted to CEP or the Committee on Courses of Instruction (CCI). The educational objectives, size, and number of credits associated with the College 1 courses remain to be determined. The Writ 20 courses for ELWR-required students (including the MLC); Writing 1/C1 and Writing 2/C2 already exist.