

COMMITTEE ON COURSES OF INSTRUCTION Annual Report, 2018-19

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

The Committee on Courses of Instruction (CCI) met bi-weekly to review campus and systemwide policies, all matters relating to courses of instruction (including review of new courses and revisions to courses), consult with other committees and administrative units, and consider graduate student instructor, undergraduate teaching assistant, and student petitions and grievances.

I. Routine Business

Course Approvals

The committee considered 143 course approvals in the fall, 68 in the winter and 189 (as of 6/17/19) in the spring, for a total of 400 courses. CCI was delegated the task of reviewing graduate courses by Graduate Council starting in fall 2018, and out of the 400 courses, 80 (20%) were graduate courses.

Through the course approval process, CCI routinely requested that instructors update syllabi with content related to best practices established by the Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning (CITL) (e.g. adding learning outcomes, DRC and Title IX notices). Through the development of the new course approval system, CCI created a “Syllabus requirements” section to promote the inclusion of important elements in each course syllabi, particularly learning outcomes, course pacing, and grading structures.

Teaching Appointments

The committee considered 216 requests for Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) teaching appointments and 3 for Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) appointments.

Student Petitions

The committee considered 89 petitions in the fall, 96 in the winter and 104 (as of 6/4/19) in the spring, for a total of 289 petitions. Of these petitions, 44 (15%) were denied. The majority of petitions were for substitutions of GE requirements (31%), followed by requests for withdrawal grades (17%), waivers of credit (15%), late add/drop (15%), and grade option changes (12%).

The committee received 10 grade grievances. 7 were denied, 1 was withdrawn, and the rest were granted initially or after investigation and further discussion.

II. Online Form Development

At the beginning of the 2018-19 academic year, CCI transitioned from the use of paper forms to online forms for many of its administrative processes, which included the student petition process, graduate student instructor teaching requests, undergraduate teaching assistant requests, and undergraduate academic assessment grievance process. CCI employed the use of Google Forms and the application Form Workflow Plus to develop an online form submission tool with an accompanying approval workflow for these processes, which included the development and use of an automated email notification system to eliminate the need to develop written correspondence for notifications regarding CCI decisions for submitted requests.

During the initial phase of the launch of these online forms, the committee faced pushback from various campus units who relied on the previous paper forms to establish their own internal processes of procuring information and required authorizations. With the sudden transition to the online system, many departments, divisions, and academic colleges experienced a disruption in their established processes and provided this feedback to the committee. As a result, CCI consulted with academic units and the colleges to develop solutions and transitional tools to aid the adoption of the new online processes. At the conclusion of the 2018-19 academic year, use of the CCI online forms has been widely accepted and established. CCI particularly appreciated the collaboration of the college advisers, departments, and divisional coordinators, who continue to provide helpful feedback to improve system function.

The online system still faces numerous limitations regarding its applicability to UCSC-specific needs, particularly with regard to system security, functionality, and the ability to make changes to an application owned by an external vendor. CCI has initiated a collaboration with UCSC ITS to develop a replacement system that would include an online form, a backend administrative system, and a sequential approval workflow. CCI is hopeful that this system will be ready to replace the first iteration of the CCI online processes during the 2019-20 academic year.

III. Online Resource Development

CCI's transition to online forms necessitated the development of many online resources for form users. CCI developed training decks with step-by-step visual guides, as well as graphical workflows for both the GSI teaching request process and the student petition process. The existing CCI website framework was restructured, and in its place CCI developed comprehensive guidelines, user manuals, document tables, and revised policy descriptions to increase transparency for both process users and students, particularly for GSI requests and student petitions.

In particular, CCI revised the online guidelines for grade option change petitions in an effort to ensure that students and advisers have a clearer understanding of the circumstances under which these types of petitions are approved, especially because grade option change requests are

reviewed so carefully to ensure fairness and avoid grade manipulation. It continues to be the ongoing goal of CCI to increase transparency in the petition process for students, while providing the advisers and committee members sufficient understanding of the general criteria used to evaluate these petitions.

IV. Online Course Policy

The Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and CCI collaborated in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 to develop a [policy](#)¹ for the university regarding fully online courses for undergraduate students. Online courses are increasingly part of the curriculum, but previously there had been no policy at UCSC and no centralized criteria or process for development and approval. The online policy covers fully online courses only, which are defined as follows: “a course section that uses online contact hours (e.g. online lectures or discussion sections, without the option for classroom attendance) and offers less than one hour of pedagogically significant face-to-face contact each week.”² Hybrid classes are considered a distinct category and are explicitly not included in the policy. The policy was endorsed by the Senate on January 9, 2019.

In order to promote departmental and university coordination in developing online courses as part of a long-term curricular plan, the procedure for developing fully online courses has been laid out as follows:

“1. Instructors first consult their department’s policy about online courses in their curriculum, if one exists, and develop a course consistent with it. 2. Instructors work to obtain approval from the Department for their course proposal. 3. Instructors may then contact Academic Affairs for consultation regarding development or support. 4. Instructors must then apply for approval from CCI (Committee on Courses of Instruction), which requires an online supplemental form, and a report after the first and third years.”³

CCI will assess course approval requests and follow-up reporting in line with the questions and criteria in CEP’s online policy. The reporting requirement has been reduced to reports after the first and third offerings.

Concerns were raised regarding the stringency of the requirement that no more than half the seats of certain courses can be offered exclusively in a fully online format. It is important to note that the courses subject to this requirement are **required** courses for majors and minors, particularly

¹ Committee on Educational Policy: Policy on UCSC Undergraduate Fully Online Courses, November 14, 2018.

² Id. at 1.

³ Id. at 2.

gateway courses. Moreover, departments can apply to CCI for a [waiver](#)⁴ of this requirement if they can demonstrate clear pedagogical advantages or student demand.

V. Consultation with AVPTL Jody Greene

The committee consulted with Associate Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning (AVPTL) Jody Greene of CITL on November 26, 2018. The consultation was to discuss best practices for course and syllabi development and the language and requirements for the new course approval forms in the SmartCatalog format. AVPTL Greene shared updates on current CITL projects, including the GSI peer mentoring program and work that has been done on developing resources for faculty on course design. Of particular interest is the development of adaptable templates and language for Title IX, CARE, and DRC notices, as well as statements on academic integrity and principles of community, which would eventually be accessible to instructors in Canvas while they develop their syllabi. CITL also expressed hope that CCI would take an active role in encouraging instructor use of revisions, exam wrappers, and other means to promote student learning as they create assignments. AVPTL Greene then provided recommendations to amend the language for the new course approval form, particularly in the syllabus requirements section, including prompting instructors to clearly align their course outcomes or objectives with program objectives and to carefully assess their assignment and grading structures in terms of organization and balance.

VI. Assessments of General Education (GE) Requirements

The current general education requirements are written to emphasize skills more than topics, and to be open to innovative approaches that might allow a given GE to be satisfied outside of a traditional home division, so long as the spirit and goals of the GE are respected. This approach has inspired the emergence of courses throughout the divisions to satisfy GEs not customarily associated with a given division. CCI employs the official GE guidelines to assess whether an application for a GE designation is appropriate for a course approval or a student GE substitution petition. However, the breadth and at times ambiguous language of the GEs can pose challenges for CCI in concrete application. The GEs most commonly the object of creative proposals and petitions are Mathematical & Formal Reasoning (MF), Perspectives: Technology and Society (PE-T), Practice: Collaborative Endeavor (PR-E), Scientific Inquiry (SI), and, above all, Textual Analysis (TA).

In order to guide CCI's understanding of the GEs, CCI Chair Aso took a number of the committee's concerns to CEP. While the May 15 discussion ranged more widely, and the possibility of revising the language of the current GEs was raised, CEP made the following determinations:

⁴ Committee on Courses of Instruction: Waiver of In-Person to Online 1:1 Seating Ratio for Required Courses, May 13, 2019.

1. There will be no requirement that students must take a certain number of GE courses outside their discipline.
2. It is the choice of departments whether to apply for GE designations for their courses. A record could be kept of courses for which CCI repeatedly receives petitions, which CCI could use to request that the department regularize its GE status.
3. GE waivers/substitutions are not to be granted on the basis of emergency, and the instructions to students should not say so. Determinations should be based on the assertion that the proposed course does satisfy the requirements for the desired GE, even if it is not designated as such.
4. CCI's current practices in interpreting the GEs were reaffirmed. In particular, the frequently challenged TA, PR-E, and PE-T GE specifications are being correctly applied by CCI.
 - a. **Textual Analysis (TA):** Course approvals and petitions have been denied the TA designation by CCI in cases where, even though there was close reading required of students, the readings and assignments were focused on content and not on analysis of the language and modes of argument as such. CEP reaffirmed that the TA designation requires evidence of explicit analysis of rhetorical tools and strategies.
 - b. **Practice: Collaborative Endeavor (PR-E):** CEP reaffirmed that for a course to qualify for the PR-E GE, the syllabus must have some readings on collaboration issues as concrete evidence of study of the collaborative process at a meta level.
 - c. **Perspectives: Technology and Society (PE-T):** CEP reaffirmed that PE-T GE requires technology *and* society, not just technology, and vice versa.

CCI thanks CEP for its guidance.

CCI also had meetings with Admissions prompted by CEP's December 6, 2018 cancellation of its delegation of authority to Admissions to certify courses at other institutions as satisfying UCSC general education (GE) requirements. Despite the cancellation, CEP affirmed that the status quo would continue for 2018-19. The cancellation was solely due to the fact that CEP's delegation had taken place before the creation of CCI. Since CEP no longer handles these matters, CCI will now be responsible for renewing the delegation, which it did in August 2019.

The cancellation and renewal of delegation to Admissions provided an occasion to reassess the university's process of certifying courses at other institutions for GEs in order to streamline and regularize the workflow, to increase coordination between Admissions and CCI, and to reduce the need for student petitions. Beginning in 2019-2020, the workflow will be as follows:

First Step: Admissions initially reviews transfer courses for GE articulations.

1. **Clear GE Assignment:** If Admissions can make a clear decision on which GE to assign to a course, the GE is assigned and the process ends.
2. **Unclear Assignment:** If Admissions cannot make a clear decision for a course, Admissions will submit a review request to CCI. CCI will review the course and make a final decision, which they will communicate directly to Admissions via email as well as in a running decision log (repository) that tracks such decisions.
3. **No Assignment:** If Admissions can make a clear decision that no GE will be assigned to a course, no GE is assigned and the process ends for Admissions. The student may then appeal to CCI via the student petition process to petition for a GE.

The specific means by which such consultation will take place are under development.

Admissions also provided CCI with a copy of the guidelines they use to make their determinations. Building on the aforementioned May 2019 consultation with CEP, CCI will continue to work with Admissions to update these guidelines to bring them in line with current practice.

VII. Enrollment Restrictions

CEP, CCI, and the Registrar are concerned about the overuse of enrollment restrictions for courses that might be presenting an obstacle to student progress toward graduation. While enrollment restriction remains a useful tool, the Registrar currently has greater capabilities than it once had to manage enrollment in more flexible and nuanced ways. The Registrar and CCI will circulate a letter that explains the appropriate tools for different situations.

VIII. Transition to SmartCatalog and the Curriculum Management System (CAT)

In 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, CCI collaborated with the Registrar's Office on developing a new course approval form for the SmartCatalog iteration of the university course catalog. While the substance and basic logic of the forms were not tampered with, the goals of CCI and the Registrar's Office included consolidation of the multiple and sometimes scattered forms previously necessary for the course approval process, greater clarity and consistency in the language and requirements of the course approval forms, and a more functional interface for CCI members when evaluating applications. In place of the sometimes awkward supplementary form questions, CCI developed a checklist of required syllabus elements for instructors to reference. CCI appreciated inclusion in the process and the responsiveness of the Registrar's team to questions and requests.

The Online Curriculum Approval (OCA) system from previous years remained in effect for fall and part of winter quarter. Members were then retrained in winter to work with the new SmartCatalog system, now known as Curriculum Approval and Tracking (CAT). In general, CCI members were pleased with the new system, particularly in how it consolidated information and did not (usually) require downloading many documents. Some departments showed discomfort

with the new system, and attached PDFs of outdated forms in addition to filling out the new CAT form. Hopefully this unnecessary duplication will disappear over time. Undergraduate and graduate course approval forms now appear on the same page and are more consistent in structure, including both requiring syllabi. In OCA, it was not possible for a faculty member to review both undergraduate and graduate courses in the same session because of access issues. This is not a problem in CAT, and thus a great improvement. Some departments found scrolling down to the graduate course specific requirements confusing at first, and also forgot to attach syllabi. Again, such problems should disappear over time.

CCI members hope that one useful feature from OCA can be carried over at some point soon to CAT: the ability to make internal informal comments for committee discussion. These should not be part of the general and more public comment flow that accompanies each application; that comment stream is best used for documentation and process rather than preliminary evaluation.

IX. Delegation of Graduate Courses to CCI

At its June 7, 2018 meeting, Graduate Council agreed to delegate review of graduate courses of instruction (including new courses, changes in existing courses, and course discontinuations) to CCI for the 2018-19 year, with Graduate Council review at the end of 2018-19 regarding whether to extend the delegation further.

X. CCI, CIE and UC Abroad Courses

CCI and CIE had discussions in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 to establish and refine the process of approval for UC Abroad Courses. It now takes place as follows: instructors submit proposals to CIE for review early winter quarter, followed by Study Abroad review. When the course proposal is determined to be viable and developed to the same level of completion as a standard course proposal, it goes to CCI for expedited review in spring.

XI. Reviewing the Strategic Academic Plan (SAP)

CCI had already devoted considerable time to review and comment in 2017-2018, and there were no radical changes of substance in the Strategic Academic Plan in 2018-2019, so CCI did not prioritize SAP review. Many of the big picture issues—such as funding for the initiatives, the nature and purview of the academic oversight committee, and how much of a role the academic priority areas will have in concrete decision-making—were appropriately raised by various Senate committees, and CCI seconded their concerns.

CCI's specific response engaged with the second initiative—experiential learning and research opportunities for students. The definition provided on page 16 of the SAP (“The wide range of

valuable on- and off-campus experiential learning, includes but is not limited to, internships, field study, project-based scaffold-type research and scholarship (either within a class or as an independent study”) was so broad that it could be considered to cover much of what is already part of the university curriculum. CCI certainly lauds the express goals of recognizing and supporting innovative pedagogy and ensuring that students are not barred from internships, fieldwork, and the like due to financial or other such circumstances. However, CCI shared the concern raised by Privilege and Tenure (P&T) in its April 29, 2019 letter regarding the proposed centralization of assessment of experiential learning across campus. What definition and concrete metrics would or could be devised to produce the cross-university fairness that appears to be one of the goals of this initiative? It is very important to clarify from the outset that any such assessment of experiential learning opportunities for students, whether at the department or other levels, should remain focused on the greater work and resources this generally requires of instructors and not shift toward penalizing instructors or departments with courses taught in a more “traditional” manner. As the Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) pointed out in its May 2, 2019 response, it should not be assumed that experiential learning is always the best and most appropriate mode of instruction in all cases.

XII. Recommendations for 2019-20 CCI

- It is crucial to sustain and further develop coordination with the college preceptors and advisers. The 2018-2019 discussions between CCI and advisers, online and off, have provided a foundation for clarifying and documenting policies and practices, which CCI should continue to build on. As one important step, the open invitation for a member of the Council of Preceptors to attend CCI meetings will happily be taken up in 2019-2020. Understanding the tremendous workload of preceptors, CCI expresses its appreciation for this opportunity for regular consultation.
- Opportunities to engage and consult with departments are also invaluable for CCI, and key topics for ongoing discussion are enrollment management requests and strategies as well as completing the transition to the various new online forms routed to CCI.
- In the course of transitioning to CAT, it was necessary to be flexible regarding submission deadlines. However, both in the case of course approvals and for other kinds of processing as well that CCI handles, the deadlines that do exist have been increasingly ignored even as CCI’s workload has increased. This is not sustainable, particularly in the summer quarter.
- The CCI Analyst, Chair, and members have to constantly shift between multiple interfaces to evaluate large quantities of information. Any means of further streamlining and consolidating should continue to be explored.
- While CAT represents a good step forward, it essential for CCI members to be able to share internal comments and questions regarding applications or any other of its review responsibilities without such preliminary remarks being placed in the public record.

- CCI and CEP should continue to track and assess the general education requirement system, both in terms of the broader landscape (are there bottleneck GEs?) and in terms of specific GE application (Is the SI or TA GE becoming overly flexible in its application?). As one step, it would be useful to keep a record of courses for which CCI repeatedly receives petitions, which CCI could use to request that the department regularize its GE status.

Finally, CCI would like to express its deepest appreciation for the Committee Analyst, Kiyana Modes, whose extraordinary contributions were critical to the ability of the committee to navigate a challenging year.

The Chair would also like to express her great appreciation for all of the committee members, who weathered a year of change with patience, care, and insight.

Respectfully submitted;
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