Committee on Educational Policy
Senior Comprehensive Requirement

While the original relationship of the comprehensive/senior exit requirement and UCSC's grading policy has vanished, CEP believes that senior capstone experiences are a core aspect of a high-quality undergraduate education.

Thesis: CEP affirms its 1995 definition of "thesis" as: "A major, coherent project that meets the standards of the senior year level of achievement in the discipline." Courses designated to satisfy the SCR 8.1.1 thesis requirement must:
   a. Show senior-year achievement, for example, by being restricted to seniors or having prerequisites that ensure only the most advanced students may enroll.
   b. Have a major coherent project with a significant writing component.

Capstone course: Typically, small seminar courses involving either one major paper or several smaller essays on a common theme, or a laboratory course. Some programs include an appropriate graduate course as an option. Sometimes, the capstone can be obtained by taking a regular upper-division course but doing work at a higher standard (e.g. a significant paper or project), signified by a 1-2 credit course taken at the same time.

Comprehensive examination: Senior comprehensive examinations are generally not recommended by CEP.

Review: The senior exit requirement must be regularly reviewed.
   a. All 6-year external reviews must include an analysis of the program's exit requirement, including student and faculty input, statistical information concerning the options chosen, and how feedback from the senior exit requirement is examined and used by the department.
   b. CEP may additionally require review and consideration of comprehensive requirements outside of the 6-year cycle.
   c. CEP will request that all programs which did not respond to our original survey respond, with this statement in hand, during Fall 2004.

Recommendations:
   a. Senior exit requirements should be integrated with an annual or biannual internal review of each major and its requirements.
   b. Course-based projects are an effective use of resources for programs unable to supervise a thesis for every student.
   c. Clear guidelines for the standards of the senior exit requirement should be available to students. These guidelines could include complexity of a performance or exhibit, the number of pages in a major paper, experimental methods required, or scope of a design.
   d. Student proposals and faculty approval prior to commencement of the work can help ensure quality and achievability.
   e. Proposals for changes to the senior exit requirement must focus on the undergraduate educational experience, rather than budget or workload. Resource availability may

constrain the range of feasible choices, but should not be the starting point for faculty discussion.

f. Programs may wish to consider satisfaction of the campus writing-intensive (W) requirement as a prerequisite to senior thesis and senior project courses.

Approved by the Committee on Educational Policy on June 17, 2004 and amended on October 16, 2019