

Overview of the UCSC General Education Requirements in Writing and their Relationship to the College Core Courses

The general education (GE) requirements in writing 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. The C1 and C2 writing requirements were integrated with the required College core courses in 2005 and are now administered by the Colleges and the Writing Program in the Humanities Division. The DC requirement replaced the W requirement when the new UCSC general education requirements were implemented in 2010; the courses that satisfy this disciplinary writing requirement are administered by the programs that sponsor students' majors.

CEP spent a considerable amount of time discussing the writing requirements while participating in the recent external review of the Writing Program. The detailed and thoughtful self-study prepared by the Writing Program raised numerous concerns about these requirements. The external review committee (ERC) shared many of these concerns and articulated fundamental problems with our C1 and C2 requirements: the courses lack a trajectory and demonstrate little evidence that the curricular approach is grounded in writing studies research; thus, our current model does not reflect best practices in the field. The ERC favors the vertical integration of writing instruction: a logical progression of writing from entry to graduation. What is learned in C1 should prepare students for C2; what is learned in C2 should prepare students for the DC. The ERC noted that the Writing Program is not solely responsible for the UCSC writing requirements and felt that campus-wide effort will be required to assess their effectiveness and determine if changes to these requirements or their learning outcomes are warranted at this time.

Based on this feedback, CEP has begun to review our general education requirements in writing in consultation with other Senate committees, the Writing Program, and the College Provosts. The following information is provided to facilitate ongoing discussions about this important topic.

The Entry Level Writing Requirement¹

All students admitted to the University of California must demonstrate an acceptable level of ability in English composition by fulfilling this requirement. Students can satisfy ELWR before entering UCSC based on their SAT, ACT, IB or AP scores²; passing an acceptable college or university English composition course; or passing the UC Analytical Writing Placement Examination (AWPE).

Although ELWR is an “entry level” requirement, it is not required for admission to any university

¹ Additional information about ELWR and the AWPE, including the purpose and history of the requirement; its relationship to the former Subject A requirement; and samples of the AWPE, can be found at <http://ucop.edu/elwr>

² 680 or higher on the Writing section of the SAT Reasoning test; 30 or higher on the ACT Combined English/Writing test; 3 or higher on the AP English (Language or Literature) exam; 5 or higher on the IB Higher Level English exam: Literature; or 5 or higher on the IB Standard Level Exam in English (Language A). However, research conducted by Hansen et al., 2004 suggests that students who satisfy college-level composition requirements through AP scores or “college-level” courses taken in the high school setting are “likely to suffer real consequences” in their post-fresh classes in which writing is assigned (“An Argument for Changing Institutional Policy and Granting A.P. Credit in English: An Empirical Study of College Sophomores’ Writing.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 28: 29-54. 2004.)

in the UC system. A student can satisfy ELWR after entering UCSC by passing a portfolio review conducted by the Writing Program. Students who fail to satisfy ELWR by their fourth quarter are barred.

The Composition 1 and 2 (C1 and C2) requirements

The C1 and C2 requirements are intended to prepare students to become effective participants in spoken and written university discourse.³ In 2005, the C1 and C2 requirements were integrated with the required college core courses; this merger was prompted – at least in part - by fiscal considerations. To satisfy C1, a student must satisfy ELWR *and* earn a grade of C or better in one of the 80A or 80C/D core courses, each of which is supposed to provide instruction in critical reading, analytical writing, and speaking in seminar. Rhetoric and Inquiry courses that satisfy C2, including the 80B core courses and Writing 2, are supposed to provide further instruction in these areas and in academic research skills.

Students can satisfy C1 before entering UCSC by earning an acceptable score on the AWPE or other standardized tests, or by passing an acceptable college or university English composition course at another institution. Students must satisfy both the C1 and C2 requirements prior to their 7th quarter of enrollment.

Pathways for satisfying the lower-division writing requirements

The path by which a student satisfies the college core course, ELWR, C1 and C2 requirements is determined by their writing proficiency upon entering UCSC and their college affiliation. These paths are described below and in the figures at the end of this document. The Colleges and Writing Program do an excellent job of guiding students toward the appropriate courses based on their academic background and test scores and help them satisfy the requirements in a timely manner⁴.

Students who satisfy ELWR and C1 prior to entry

These students take the 80B (C2) core course to satisfy their only remaining lower-division writing requirement.

Students who satisfy ELWR but not C1 prior to entry

These students enroll in sections of the 80A (C1) core course. These sections are, with few exceptions, are taught by faculty who are hired by the Colleges. After passing this class, the majority of these students satisfy C2 by taking and passing Writing 2 prior to their 7th quarter of enrollment, thus completing their lower-division writing requirements.

Students who satisfy neither ELWR nor C1 prior to entry

The paths taken by students who don't satisfy ELWR prior to entry vary by College and AWPE score. At Cowell, Merrill, Porter and Stevenson College, all students who enter as ELWR-required (i.e. AWPE scores below 8) enroll in ELWR-required sections of core 80A. At Kresge, Oakes, and Colleges Eight, Nine and Ten, students with AWPE scores of 6 enroll in ELWR-required sections of core 80A; while those with AWPE scores 5 and below enroll in a two quarter

³ With few exceptions, sections of 80B (C2) Core are taught by faculty hired by the colleges; sections of 80A (C1) for those who enter ELWR-satisfied are also taught by faculty hired by the colleges; and sections of Core for those who enter not yet having satisfied ELWR 80A and 80C/D (C1) are taught by faculty hired by the Writing Program.

⁴ For additional information, please see <http://writing.ucsc.edu/requirements/incoming-freshmen/index.html>

“stretch” core sequence (80C/D).⁵

As part of their work in ELWR-required sections of Core (80A and 80D), students attempt to satisfy ELWR by preparing a portfolio of the work they produce in Core, which is assessed by the Writing Program⁶. Students who satisfy ELWR take Writing 2 to satisfy C2 and complete their lower-division writing requirements. Those who do not satisfy ELWR in the core course must take a course offered by the Writing Program (Writing 20, 21 and 23) and submit portfolio materials each quarter until they satisfy ELWR, at which time they are allowed to enroll in Writing 2.

The Crown College pathway for satisfying ELWR/C1/C2

Crown College recently introduced an alternative pathway for satisfying ELWR and the C1 and C2 requirements. Crown students who have satisfied ELWR but not C1 take Crwn 79 (a 2 credit course) in the fall followed by Crwn 80A in the winter to satisfy the Core and C1 requirements. Students who have satisfied both ELWR and C1 take Crwn 80B in the fall to satisfy both the Core and C2 requirements. Students who haven't satisfied ELWR take Writing 20 to prepare them for the portfolio review at the end of the fall quarter. Those Crown students who remain ELWR-required after completing the fall Writing 20 course are placed into ELWR-required sections of 80A in the winter; the others enroll in ELWR-satisfied sections of 80A. Students who do not satisfy ELWR after completing 80A continue to take additional writing courses (Writing 21 and 23) until they satisfy ELWR. After passing 80A and satisfying ELWR, Crown students complete their lower-division writing requirements by taking Writing 2.

The Multilingual Curriculum

To meet the needs of international students with low proficiency in English, the Writing Program recently created a multilingual curriculum (MLC) limited to incoming international frosh who have not satisfied ELWR. This curriculum has three overarching goals:

- To ease students' transition into the rigor of reading and writing in academic English by scaffolding their learning at a pace targeted to their needs;
- To provide instruction in academic English that explicitly addresses the cultural and rhetorical elements of communicating academic English; and
- To help students integrate more fully into the campus and local community by creating community-based research projects.

Additionally, this curriculum includes a four-course sequence: Writing 24, Writing for Academic Purposes; Writing 25, Writing about Place; Writing 26, Writing about Language; and Writing 27, Writing about Genre.

Each of these courses contains course goals related to writing, reading, speaking, listening, metacognition, academic and personal development, and community in order to best serve international students' needs. Students enter into the MLC by completing a standard writing

⁵ Stretch essentially acts as a 20-week core course; ELWR is assessed at the end of the Winter quarter.

⁶ Students submit one representative sample project from their ELWR course that their instructors and peers have provided feedback for and a cover letter that has that articulates their understanding of writing but has received no feedback from instructors or peers. This way, the Writing Program can assess students' writing abilities in two ways: how they write when they receive expert feedback and how they write when they do not receive expert feedback.

assessment that places them in the appropriate class. The final course, W27, bears ELWR-credit for students who pass with a C or higher.

In the spring of 2015, CEP approved the MLC for students entering as freshmen in the fall of 2015, with its further extension dependent on outcome of ongoing discussions of the lower-division writing and college core courses and further consultation with other Senate committees. With the approval of SEC, the program was extended for an additional year.

In response to the creation of the MLC, each college was asked to create a plan to articulate the relationship between the MLC and the college core course, particularly with regard to students' completion of the C1 outcomes. The colleges are piloting multiple approaches in response (See figure 2 below).

The Disciplinary Communication (DC) requirement

The intent of the upper-division DC requirement is to ensure that students acquire the skills in writing and other forms of communication appropriate for their discipline. Students satisfy the DC requirement by completing 1 to 3 upper-division courses required for their major, totaling a minimum of 5 credits⁷. C1 and C2 are pre-requisites for all DC courses. DC courses must be taken at UCSC; this requirement is automatically fulfilled by the completion of major requirements.

The College core courses are a distinctive feature of the first-year experience at UCSC

The role of the College Core courses is not limited to instruction in composition and rhetoric. Like many of the great private universities such as Yale, UCSC seeks to provide its undergraduates with a collegiate experience. The College Core courses nourish in the students a desire to learn and an eagerness to share knowledge with others. They build a sense of community and are important for student success and retention. Due to the large size of most introductory courses on our campus, the Core courses also provide one of the few opportunities for first-year students to engage in class discussions, directly interact with their instructor and other students, and develop a sense of belonging. Faculty, students and alumni value the Core courses and consider them to be a distinguishing feature of the first-year experience.

CEP's concerns about the writing requirements

Approximately 40% of incoming students do not satisfy ELWR before entering UCSC as frosh. This problem is not restricted to our campus⁸ and is likely to worsen as we enroll increasing numbers of students who lack adequate preparation in writing. After completing and passing the core course (which carries C1 outcomes), a surprisingly large number of students fail to satisfy ELWR based on their performance in the portfolio review. CEP has therefore decided that students should satisfy ELWR before enrolling in a C1 course, as is currently required on all other UC campuses. CEP will propose legislation formalizing this requirement at the spring 2016 Senate meeting.

⁷ Students must complete at least 25 pages of individual writing (including drafts) with no single assignment less than two pages in length. 25 pages of writing corresponds to ~6,000 words in 12-point, Times New Roman font, with double-spaced lines and 1.25 inch page margins. The formal writing requirement may be reduced to 18 pages if students receive instruction in alternative forms of disciplinary communication approved by CEP.

⁸ Information about the percentage of students admitted to the University of California who do not satisfy ELWR prior to entry can be found at ucop.edu/elwr.

Additionally, the C1 and C2 outcomes have not been revised in light of recent research on the teaching and learning of writing,⁹ nor were they revised in response to the DC requirement. In other words, there has been no move to create a vertically designed writing curriculum that would structure students' learning from the point of entry to the point of exit. This leads us to question whether our lower-division writing requirements are providing an adequate foundation for the Disciplinary Communication (DC) general education requirement and writing in other upper-division courses.

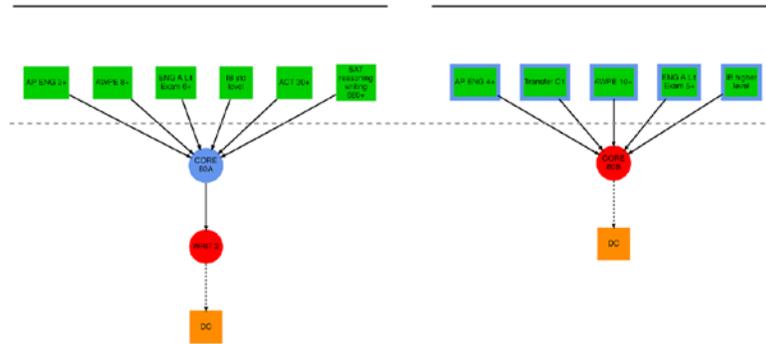
The number of courses and credits required to satisfy the lower division writing requirements ranges from one to five courses and 5 to 25 credits, not including additional courses required by some colleges or for students in the Multilingual Curriculum. Preliminary data suggest that roughly 20% of incoming freshmen must take 3 lower-division writing courses; about 7% must take 4 or more writing courses. These students may find it difficult to satisfy other GE requirements; address potential deficiencies in mathematics; or take the foundational courses required for their major. Many departments do not appear to be taking these challenges into account when developing advising plans and sample schedules for their majors.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds often need additional help to satisfy ELWR and other lower-division writing requirements, as evidenced by the growing number of students in the ELWR-unsatisfied sections of 80A; the “stretch” core 80C/D courses; and the Writing 20, 21, and 23 courses. The longer a student remains ELWR-unsatisfied, the less likely he or she is to graduate from UCSC (even if he or she does satisfy ELWR). The outcomes for Writing 20, Writing 21, and Writing 23 suggest that the classes are post-C1/pre-C2 classes, but in reality, they function as developmental writing courses (that is pre-C1). This raises a number of questions, such as: How are so many ELWR-required students earning credit for a C1-bearing course while remaining ELWR required? (ii) Why does the campus wait to provide preparatory instruction in writing until (in most cases) the second or third quarter of instruction? Can core effectively function as both a writing course (i.e., a class in which students learn *about* writing, not simply produce writing) *and* a college-themed content course? Problems with the sequence of the EWLK-required curriculum, including the role of core in that curriculum, may have a negative impact on the retention and graduation rates of these students.

In general, there was a relatively smooth transition from the W to the DC requirement. However, some of our colleagues have complained that the DC requirement is an unfunded mandate that is difficult to support in a period of declining resources and increasing enrollments. Other colleagues have expressed concerns about the preparedness of the students in their DC courses. CEP believes that attention to these concerns is warranted.

⁹ The most recent research on the teaching and learning of writing at the college level strongly suggests that a curriculum designed to equip students with a meta-level understanding of writing through a study of genre will prepare them to transfer their knowledge about writing from their writing courses to their other courses (see, for example, Yancey et al, *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer Composition, and Sites of Writing*, 2014). A growing body of research also suggests that including the composition of multi-modal texts (for instance, podcasts) into writing courses is important in enhancing the language development of all students, but especially multi-lingual students. Finally, the Council of Writing Program Administrators [released in July 2014 their revised recommendations](#) for outcomes in composition courses. The C1/C2 outcomes do not reflect this research.

Figure 1: Overview of the paths taken to satisfy the UCSC writing requirements
 ELWR satisfied (44%) ELWR and C1 satisfied (18%)

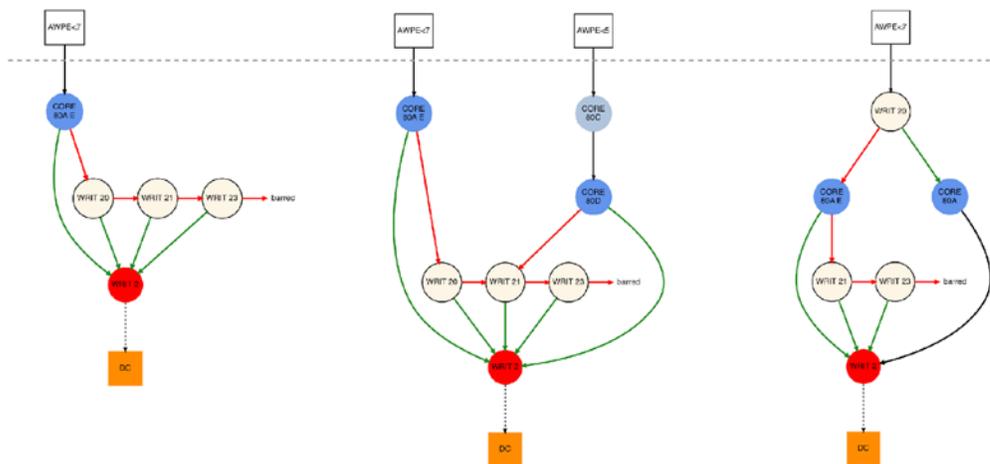


ELWR not satisfied (38%)

Cowell, Porter, Merrill, Stevenson

Eight, Nine, Ten, Oakes, Kresge

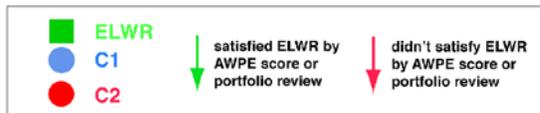
Crown



Students who haven't satisfied ELWR take special section of 80A Core

Students who haven't satisfied ELWR take special section of 80A Core or two quarter "stretch" 80C/D Core

Students who haven't satisfied ELWR take Writ 20 before 80A Core



All courses shown in the above diagram are 5 credit courses.

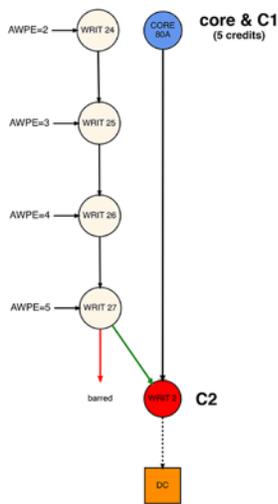
Students must satisfy ELWR and earn a grade of C or better in 80A or D to satisfy C1

Specific DC courses may have additional prerequisites.

Note that some colleges have slightly different pathways/core requirements than shown above

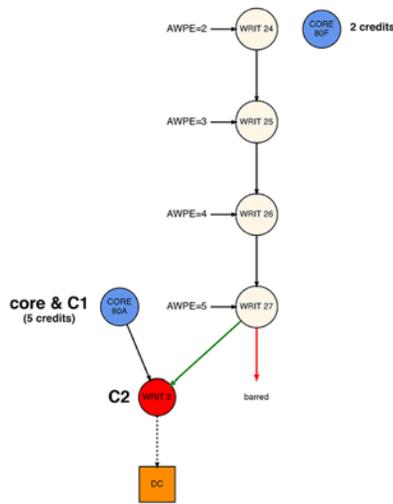
Figure 2: Multilingual Curriculum

Writ 24-27 placement determined by AWPE score; Writ 27 satisfies ELWR



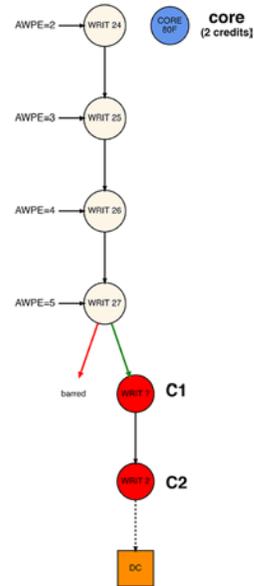
Cowell College

80A in fall satisfies College core and C1 requirements
 C2 satisfied by Writing Program classes
 No change from current system, other than mechanism of ELWR satisfaction
 College core course remains linked to C1



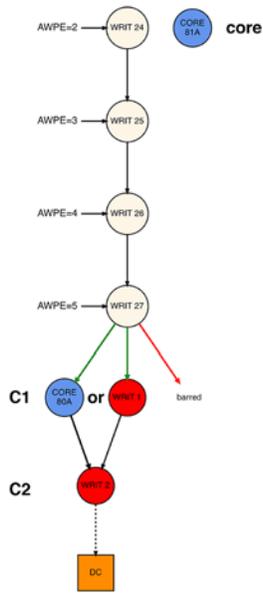
Oakes and Stevenson
 80F in fall doesn't satisfy core or C1

Students take core course in fall of sophomore year to satisfy core and C1
 C2 satisfied by Writing Program class
 College core course remains linked to C1, but delayed one year



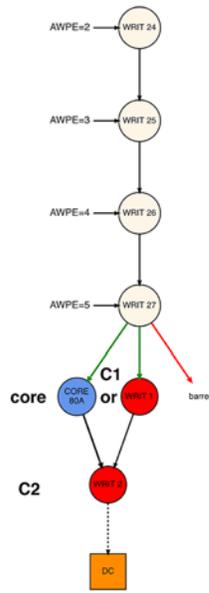
Colleges Nine, Ten, Kresge, Merrill, Porter

80F in fall satisfies College core requirement
 C1, C2 satisfied by Writing Program classes
 College core course decoupled from C1 and C2



College Eight

81A in fall satisfies College core requirement
 C1 satisfied by Writing Program class or 80A
 C2 satisfied by Writing Program classes
 College core courses partially decoupled from C1 and C2



Crown College

Students do not take a College course in fall
 C1 satisfied by Writing Program class or 80A in fall of sophomore year
 C2 satisfied by Writing Program class
 College core courses partially decoupled from C1 and C2