

## Common Core Guidelines

Office of Academic Affairs, City University of New York

January 24, 2012

Colleges have flexibility in choosing courses for the eight areas of the Common Core, but courses must be three credits and three hours (with a limited exception for math and science courses described below), and they must fulfill the requisite learning outcomes for the areas for which they are submitted. Courses must also be submitted for only one curricular area of the Common Core.

- **Number and type of courses to be submitted for each area.**

- Colleges can decide how many courses to submit for each of the eight curricular areas, with one constraint: If they elect to offer four-credit courses in science and math under the STEM exception, they must first insure that they have sufficient three-credit courses available in these fields that students can freely take them. Colleges should plan to offer sufficient three-credit, three-hour courses/sections such that all students wishing to fulfill general education requirements in that way may do so beginning Fall 2013.
- Colleges can create their own specific requirements within curricular areas by limiting course offerings within areas, e.g., colleges could require American History by submitting only American History courses for the U.S. Experience in its Diversity area.
- Similarly, colleges could require foreign languages by mandating that students who do not meet specified proficiency levels would have to take a foreign language course in World Cultures and Global Issues. Those students who met the proficiency requirements could take other courses the college submitted to fulfill learning outcomes in this area. However, note that, independent of proficiency level, all students have to take a course from this area.
- Colleges can specify the curricular area from which students must take their sixth course in the Flexible Core. This would enable them, if they chose, to require students to take two foreign language courses or to take two courses in other fields.
- Colleges also have the option of submitting many courses drawn from a wide range of disciplinary or interdisciplinary fields for particular areas within the Common Core. In subjects with strong sequencing, such as math, colleges must insure that they have courses available at sufficient levels that each student can take courses appropriate to his or her level of knowledge and skill.
- Although colleges have a variety of options regarding the courses that they submit and require for the Common Core, they must accept for full Common Core course credit whatever a student has taken for the core at any other CUNY college.
- Colleges can choose their own means of generating course submissions, either leaving it up to individual faculty members, groups of faculty, or departments to submit courses

to the CUNY-wide Common Core Course Review Committee, or deciding on an overall course development strategy through a college-wide committee or some other means. In all cases, courses must be approved by campus governance before being submitted for formal approval to the CUNY-wide Committee and to the central Office of Academic Affairs.

- **Student course selection.**
  - Colleges may develop college-wide requirements, as outlined above, but they may not authorize departments to require particular Common Core courses for particular majors or degree programs. The Common Core is designed as an opportunity for students to gain broad knowledge and to explore different fields and academic approaches. If particular courses were mandated for particular majors or degree programs, students would be locked in early to particular academic tracks and would be hampered if they changed majors or degree programs. Many undergraduates change majors as they take classes in subjects not available to them in high school or realize the depth and intellectual interest of fields presented at the college level.
  - Although departments cannot mandate that students take particular Common Core courses as parts of degree programs or majors, or as prerequisites for them, they can recommend particular Common Core classes to students as being especially valuable or appropriate for those planning on entering their fields.
- **Four- and three-credit math and science courses.**
  - According to New York State Education Department guidelines, three-credit three-hour science courses, as will be included in the Common Core, may be any distribution of lecture, laboratory, and discussion that a college wishes.
  - Colleges may offer four-credit math and science courses if they first offer sufficient three-credit courses in these fields such that students can take three-credit courses if they so choose. Those courses offered for four credits must be part of the relevant majors or degree programs.
  - If students do not apply the four-credit courses toward a major or degree program, the fourth credit will be accepted as elective credit.
- **Waivers from Common Core requirements.**
  - Colleges can request waivers from Common Core requirements when meeting the requirements would violate specific licensing or accreditation standards for particular degree programs or majors. Waiver requests will be closely examined to insure that the Common Core could not be accommodated.
  - Waiver requests should be sent to [Pathways@mail.cuny.edu](mailto:Pathways@mail.cuny.edu) with “Waiver Request” in the subject line. Colleges can also request an informal review of whether Common Core requirements could be accommodated in light of mandatory major or degree program requirements (mandatory here means required by specific licensing or accreditation standards).
- **Course submission process.**

- A SharePoint interactive form will be available on the web for course submissions. The form is modeled on one previously developed at Queensborough Community College. The form requires course developers to specifically state how the planned course will meet the designated learning outcomes for the area. All forms from a given college should be submitted by a single designated staff or faculty member at that college.
- Courses will be reviewed by a Common Core Course Review Committee made up entirely of tenured faculty members. Subcommittees for each of the eight Common Core curricular areas will review courses submitted in those areas.
- Courses may be submitted for an informal review by the Common Core Course Review Committee at any stage of the campus review process.
- **College Option credits.**
  - Senior colleges do not need to submit College Option credits to the Course Review Committee. This committee will review only courses submitted for the Common Core. Senior colleges may deploy their College Option credits as they wish.
  - If a student transfers after completing College Option credits, the receiving college must accept those credits as College Option credits and may not require the student to complete additional College Option credits.
  - If a college chooses to require different College Option credits for students in particular majors, the college may not require students who change majors after completing College Option credits to complete additional College Option credits.