

Foundations Subcommittee Report UNC-CH General Education Curriculum Review

Members: Yaakov Ariel (Religious Studies), Glynis Cowell (Romance Languages; Academic Advising Program), Erika Lindemann (Liaison, Office of Undergraduate Curricula), Richard McLaughlin (Mathematics, Committee Chair), Dulcie Straughan (Journalism and Mass Communication), Dorothy Verkerk (Art), Heather Williams (History), Marilyn Wyrick (Academic Advising Program).

Charges: The committee examined a list of committee charges through a series of detailed committee meetings and out-of-committee research on various items concerning a screening of a sample of course syllabi to determine if the Foundations curriculum criteria are adhered to. The specific list of charges this committee addressed is as follows:

- 1. English Composition and Rhetoric. Should there be a mandatory one-semester writing requirement (with honors sections offered) for all students who enter Carolina regardless of AP credit or score on the SAT II exam? If that occurs, what are the advantages (and disadvantages) of awarding three or four hours of credit for the one-semester course?**
- 2. Quantitative Reasoning. Do the approved courses adhere to the criteria?**
- 3. Foreign Language. Is the requirement that students who place into level 4 must take the course a useful requirement?**
- 4. Lifetime Fitness. Are LFIT courses receiving appropriate academic credit (PHYA courses do not receive credit)? Should students be required to take LFIT courses for graded credit or be allowed to take them Pass/D+/D/Fail? Should students be allowed to repeat the course (is there enough distinction from one section to another to make it a valuable experience)? How many PHYA courses (if any) should a student be allowed to take?**
- 5. Syllabus review. Are the goals met? Do they match the criteria? How should the criteria be distributed to maintain compliance?**

Note: While we were charged to examine the PHYA questions in Item 4, we were directed following the review to remove the item from further consideration.

Meetings:

- 1. 3/31/2010** (reviewed charges, addressed points 2, 3, 5)
- 2. 4/28/2010** (met with Jane Danielewicz from the Department of English and Comparative Literature regarding point 1)
- 3. 5/4/2010** (met with Barbara Osborne and Becca Battaglini from the Department of Exercise and Sport Science regarding point 4)

Findings:

Charge 1: All students to take a one-semester four-credit writing and oral communication course:

The committee unanimously endorsed the idea of developing a new, one semester, mandatory writing and oral communication course for four credit hours to replace the existing two-semester

sequence English 101/102. This course, which has the support of the Department of English and Comparative Literature, would be taught as a three-credit-hour classroom course, with the additional credit hour obtained through a recitation session. The rationale for this change is to insure that all Carolina students be trained in university-level writing and oral communication skills. Many students passing out of the 101/102 sequence via SAT, ACT, IB, and/or AP credit are missing key training in writing and oral communication skills, which is essential in all disciplines, and further missing out on important library, research, and oral communication skills. The committee discussed alternatives to this modification, such as raising the placement bar to further guarantee that Carolina students receive proper training in written and oral communication. While such an approach would increase the number of students taking the 101/102 sequence, it still would not necessarily guarantee that all Carolina students receive proper training in written and oral communication. Students presently placing out of 101/102 are not receiving the university-level training desired of a Carolina student. Further, increasing the passing bar still amounts to relying too heavily upon the metrics invoked by SAT, ACT, IB, and AP (and for that matter the non-uniform training offered by high schools).

A cost-benefit analysis reported to the committee by Dean Bobbi Owen suggested that the increased numbers of students taking this new course could be safely accommodated with the planned reduction to a single course of four credit hours without increasing the workload in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, which would administer this new course. This new course could be taught by faculty trained in composition, though other qualified personnel (advanced graduate students, and adjunct appointments) could teach this course as well. Clearly an advantage of offering the course as three credit hours is that it is less demanding upon the units administering the course. But the cost analysis indicates that a fourth credit hour incurs no additional cost over the present approach, and is essential in moving from a two-semester sequence to a single semester sequence.

Possible issues associated with this change include providing for honors students sections of ENGL 102I (discipline-specific writing and oral communication courses for the sciences, humanities, social sciences, law, and business), the need for course coordinators, and lab coordinators for the fourth credit hour. Also, both 101 and 102 would need to be temporarily kept on the books for the next three to four years to serve students entering UNC-CH under the current ENGL 101/102 requirement.

A note about placement testing: Departments and curricula reserve the right to determine how they will use placement tests and scores—or not. So if a department chooses not to award credit for an AP placement score of 2, for example, it can make that determination. In the case of the proposed ENGL course, the department would make the determination NOT to accept any placement score from any placement test; such a decision needs the support of the Administrative Boards because a General Education requirement is involved, and because it's unusual for a university to not accept some placement credit for first-year composition courses. However, several peer institutions no longer accept AP credit for placement into or exemption from first-year writing courses, among them Stanford University, the University of Michigan, and Penn State University.

Charge 2: Are QR courses meeting QR requirements:

The issue regarding if the currently approved quantitative reasoning courses meet the actual criteria for this Foundation requirement was examined through a detailed evaluation of selected course syllabi. It was generally found that the current list of approved courses does meet the criteria, and a summary of the detailed syllabi evaluations is given in an appendix. However, there are three First Year Seminars (COMP 050, 066, 070) which presently satisfy the QR general education requirement. First Year Seminars cannot satisfy Foundations requirements, and this error should be corrected. The fact that no mathematics first-year seminars currently satisfy the QR requirement further emphasizes the need to correct this error. An additional course which currently satisfies the QR requirement but which is under question is PHIL 155. A detailed history provided by Sue Goodman from the Department of Mathematics that this course was not recommended for QR, but somewhere along the way, QR was assigned to this course, again, presumably a clerical error that should be corrected. This history is provided in an appendix to this document. Lastly, the content of an additional first-year seminar, PHYS 071, satisfying the QI connections requirement, was also examined. The syllabus provided no information regarding the quantitative methods applied; the course does not appear to satisfy the QI requirement, and should be re-examined by the Curriculum Committee of the Administrative Boards.

Charge 3: Remove the stipulation that students placing into level 4 be required to take course to satisfy the level-3 FL requirement:

The issue here concerns a detail of the foreign language requirement involving students placing into level 4 of a foreign language: Currently, students whose placement exam scores place them into level 4 of a foreign language (typically numbered 204 or 404) are required to take the level 4 course in order to demonstrate that they have level-3 proficiency in the language and, thus, have satisfied the FL General Education requirement. This is so even if the student's major doesn't require a level-4 FL course. The Foundations committee discussed this policy and didn't see the sense in it. If a department has accepted the validity of a placement exam that assigns students to a FL level-4 course, why not just accept the results of the placement exam and give students BE credit for level 3 (to certify that they have met the FL requirement)? If we trust our placement exam policies, then a student who has placed into level 4 should be regarded as having proficiency at level 3—without the additional requirement of taking a level-4 course. If we don't trust our placement exam policies, then faculty need to fix the policies/cut-off scores, or whatever is needed, rather than asking students to "validate" (by taking a level-4 course) the faculty-established placement scores. A placement exam score sufficiently high to place a student into level 4 should, by itself, satisfy the level 3 FL requirement. The current practice is peculiar, as the practice of validating a lower-level course by taking the next course in a sequence doesn't appear elsewhere in the curriculum. Additionally, in meeting with the academic advisors, Dean Lindemann found considerable support for doing away with the requirement that students who place into level 4 must pass the level-4 course before receiving credit for having satisfied the level-3 requirement. Hence we recommend:

Recommendation: To rescind the requirement that students placed into level 4 of a foreign language must complete the level-4 course to satisfy the foreign language Foundations requirement. Placement into level 4 of a foreign language is sufficient evidence that a student has

demonstrated level-3 proficiency and merits By-Examination (BE) credit for the level 3 course.

An additional note regarding this particular recommendation and placement tests, as contrasted with Charge 1 above: In this case, foreign language departments and the College HAVE chosen to accept certain placement test and scores. The proposed recommendation is upholding those tests and scores as the ONLY basis for having satisfied the FL requirement; in other words, we're saying that taking a level-4 course to satisfy level-3 proficiency is double jeopardy and unnecessary. In contrast, the recommendation in Charge 1 is to NOT accept scores from any placement tests, and require ALL students to take a one-semester writing and oral communication course.

Charge 4: Lifetime fitness course limits, and academic credit:

The committee met at length with Barbara Osborne and Becca Battaglini from the Department of Exercise and Sport Science, who provided a detailed explanation of the academic content of UNC-CH's LFIT courses, and the committee was satisfied that these courses do provide sufficient academic work to merit UNC credit hours. But the committee felt that the academic content is redundant if taken an additional time and recommends that all students be limited to taking one and only one lifetime fitness during their studies at UNC-CH. Further, the committee feels that the appropriate credit for a lifetime fitness course should remain at one credit hour, the current credit offered for a lifetime fitness course. Both Barbara Osborne and Becca Battaglini were satisfied with this recommendation, and it has the support of the Department of Exercise and Sport Science and the unanimous support of the committee.

Charge 5: Syllabus Review

The committee conducted a syllabus review of selected Foundations courses to determine if the courses are indeed meeting the guidelines for satisfying the various General Education requirements. An addendum to this report contains a course-by-course summary of this review. In general, the reviewed courses were observed to satisfy the General Education requirements. A few courses (such as the QR/QI courses listed in Charge 2 above) were found not to satisfy the requirements. With the exception of the noted QR and QI courses already listed, the shortcomings were syllabi-related. It appears that a few course syllabi do not make it sufficiently clear whether the General Education requirements are being met. This is likely a shortcoming of the syllabi themselves and does not reflect an error in the process of approving the course's General Education designations in the first place (with the noted exception of the QR/QI courses). The committee recommends that some better means of disseminating the content of the General Education requirements be developed so that instructors developing new courses, students taking courses, and instructors writing syllabi for existing courses better understand the requirements.

Appendix 1: Course syllabi review spreadsheet

Appendix 2: Original recommendations for QR courses, showing PHIL 155 not slated for QR, and additional email from Sue Goodman from the Department of Mathematics regarding this issue