

University Core Curriculum

Policy Memorandum No. 44

Recommended by the Commission on Undergraduate Studies
Approved by University Council: January 17, 1983
Approved by the President: January 17, 1983
Effective: Immediately

Completing more than three years of studies at several levels within the University, the University Council on January 17 approved a recommendation of the Commission on Undergraduate Studies to establish a University Core Curriculum. Recommendations for the core curriculum were first developed by the "Collins Committee," which placed its recommendations before the University community in both an interim form and a final report, which was published in the spring of 1982. Subsequently, a subcommittee of the Commission on Undergraduate Studies made recommendations to the full commission. The University Council, working with the Commission, made further refinements to the Resolution. The Resolution adopted by Council follows:

WHEREAS, the report to the Faculty of the University Committee on Liberal Education and the Professions makes a compelling case for rational design and coherence in the liberal education component of every undergraduate's program of study; and

WHEREAS, the Committee has made certain recommendations for accomplishing that design and coherence, the central feature of which is a Universitywide required core curriculum of courses in basic subjects; and

WHEREAS, current financial and other constraints upon the University make it impossible to implement, at the outset, much in the way of the new courses, new staffing, or new administrative structures called for or implied in the Report.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the University move forward as promptly as possible with the implementation of a core curriculum for all undergraduates, but one that requires at the outset only the courses, resources, and structures now in hand, and that

1. The University establish a core curriculum requirement of 48 credit hours to be completed by all students receiving any bachelor's degree from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.
2. The 48 credit hours of the University core curriculum will be distributed as: (1, 2)
 - a. 9 hours of Freshman English (English 1121, 1122, 1123 or equivalent)
 - b. 9 hours of mathematics
 - c. 9 hours of humanities and/or fine arts
 - d. 9 hours of social and/or behavioral science
 - e. 12 hours of natural science (including laboratory experience).

3. In order to provide a continuous experience in intellectual development for the student, courses fulfilling core requirements in each distribution area should be either a full year (3 quarter) sequence or be part of a 3-course series in which all students share the same developing sense of depth and sophistication. These series need not be straightforward academic year sequences. They may be clusters of three courses connected by design. However, unconnected groupings of the independent courses that can be taken in any order or single quarter courses not designed to connect to any other supporting or extending courses may not be used to fulfill core requirements.
4. Initially, course sequences or clusters in the core curriculum will be drawn from existing course offerings (or modified from current offerings where modification is necessary to fulfill requirements in recommendation number 3). Subsequently, as they are approved by the normal processes, other course sequences or clusters will be considered for inclusion in the core curriculum.
5. With the exception of Freshman English (English 1121, 1122, 1123 or equivalent), which specifically is part of the core curriculum from the outset, course sequences or clusters will be designated as part of the core curriculum using the following procedure:
 - a. Department will nominate course sequences or clusters from among their offering that they desire to be included in the core curriculum through their College Curriculum Committee.
 - b. Nominations will be compiled for each of the four subject areas by standing subject area committees of 5 appropriate, responsible faculty members appointed by the Provost. At least three colleges shall be represented on each of these committees. Committee members will serve three-year terms, staggered to assure continuity.
 - c. Each subject area committee will review all course sequence and cluster nominations submitted to it for consideration. Subsequently, all nominations shall be transmitted, with the committee's recommendations, to the Commission on Undergraduate Studies. The Commission will then, by vote, determine whether or not each nominated course sequence or cluster is to be included in the Core Curriculum.
6. The subject area committee will also serve as advisory bodies to both the departments offering (and proposing to offer) course sequences or clusters in the core curriculum and to the Commission on Undergraduate Studies concerning various aspects of the development and operation of the core curriculum.
7. Only course sequences and clusters designated as part of the core curriculum by the Commission on Undergraduate Studies can be used to satisfy the requirements of recommendations 1, 2 and 3. The Registrar will maintain a list of core curriculum courses. Course sequences and clusters approved for the core curriculum will carry an appropriate designation in the catalog of courses. Individual student variances (course substitutions) with respect to the University core curriculum requirements will be considered by the Academic Appeals Committee (See also footnote 2).
8. All courses taken at Virginia Tech to fulfill the University core curriculum must be taken on an A-F basis (not Pass/Fail).

9. The University core curriculum requirement will be placed in effect for entering classes beginning with the first academic year following compilation and approval by the Commission on Undergraduate Studies of the initial list of course sequences and clusters comprising the core curriculum.

FOOTNOTES

1. Clearly, students transferring to the University from other places will have on their transcripts courses which may not literally (or perfectly) satisfy these exact requirements. Judgements will need to be made and allowances given, when appropriate, for courses which seem to the transcript evaluator to satisfy the intent of the requirements. It is deemed not feasible to specify, at the outset and for all possible cases, limits within which those judgements and allowances must be made. However, when accepting courses from elsewhere in lieu of one or another part of the core curriculum requirement, the transcript evaluator must so specify, for the permanent academic record of the student. Evaluation criteria must be agreed upon in common and applied with consistency by transcript evaluators in all colleges of the University, with respect to allowances made for transfer credit in lieu of courses taken to satisfy University Core Curriculum requirements.
2. It is anticipated that some students will satisfy one or more of the five enumerated requirements in ways not literally prescribed here, but deemed equivalent by the Commission on Undergraduate Studies. This includes:
 - a. Appropriate advanced placement credit awarded to entering freshmen for up to three quarters (9 or 12 or 15 hours) each of work in English, mathematics, or a subject in the humanities, social sciences or natural sciences, will be accepted in lieu of actual VPI&SU course work in that subject area.
 - b. Honors sections of various courses at the introductory level (e.g. Freshman Honor English, Freshman Honors Chemistry), which are designed to reach in two quarters of work the same level of skills development, depth, and mastery of basic concepts that the regular courses reach in three quarters, will be considered the equivalent of their three-quarter regular course counterparts for the purpose of satisfying core curriculum requirements.
 - c. Credit by Examination (see University Catalog) may be used to satisfy any of the requirements of the University core curriculum.

President's Policy Memorandum

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