

Responses to Questions and Topics Addressed in the Core Curriculum Townhall Meeting

Compiled 12/6/2023

Signature Assignments

Signature Assignments are assignments that engage students in authentic, real-world application of the knowledge and techniques of the course, and that prompt students to reflect on the assignment and the course. The goal of signature assignments is to help students make meaning of their work by connecting individual, course, and core curricular learning goals. It helps them see the value of what they have learned and prompts them to reflect on the competencies they have developed.

The precise form a signature assignment takes is up to the faculty, based on their course context. The core requirements are that it be an authentic assignment, rather than something like an exam. It could take the form of an essay, website, poster, lab report, journal, or many other creative products. Additionally, the signature assignment will be required to speak to the requisite core competency learning outcomes for the course.

3 credit hour First Year Experience

The idea of the course is to be a ‘hybrid’ between two different types of First-Year Experience: The “academic” first year experience and the “extended orientation” first year experience. Our current system is purely an “extended orientation” model. An “academic” model incorporates academic content, and so has a disciplinary or topical focus, and puts emphasis on the development of academic skills (such as critical thinking, reading comprehension, and communication). A hybrid course has far less academic content than a standard academic course might (common rule of thumb is about 50% of the content found in a standard introductory course), but by incorporating academic content and having students engage in college while learning how to succeed in college, their learning is immediately put into action and is experienced as more meaningful. A meta-analysis of first year experience courses found that 3 credit hour hybrid courses were the most efficacious.¹ 1-credit-hour seminars, no matter the type, showed little to no benefit;² and purely extended orientation courses, regardless of credit hours, had no statistically significant effect on student success.³

¹ Vahe Permzadian and Marcus Credé, “Do First-Year Seminars Improve College Grades and Retention? A Quantitative Review of Their Overall Effectiveness and an Examination of Moderators of Effectiveness,” *Review of Educational Research* 86, no. 1 (March 1, 2016): 277–316, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315584955>; Dallin George Young, “Is First-Year Seminar Type Predictive of Institutional Retention Rates?,” *Journal of College Student Development* 61, no. 3 (2020): 379–90.

² Angela L. Vaughan, Stephanie I. Pergantis, and Susannah M. Moore, “Assessing the Difference Between 1-, 2-, and 3-Credit First-Year Seminars on College Student Achievement,” *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition* 31, no. 2 (November 15, 2019): 9–28.

³ Dharmananda Jairam, “First-Year Seminar Focused on Study Skills: An Ill-Suited Attempt to Improve Student Retention,” *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 44, no. 4 (April 20, 2020): 513–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2019.1582757>.

The general idea is that faculty would design these courses just like any other but would be required to build in specific first-year seminar content and design the course with a heavy emphasis on academic skill development. As far as the “extended orientation” content that would be included, that will be reviewed by a faculty committee with new requirements established.

Replacement Courses

The committee proposes replacement courses will be determined at the discretion of the Core Curriculum director and UCC.

Program Capstones

Given the feedback during the townhall and an earlier survey which asked about this requirement, the committee has decided to eliminate the *requirement* that all programs include a capstone. Programs may choose whether to include a capstone or other culminating project, and will have greater freedom to determine what such a project may look like.

WAC/Advanced Writing

The new requirements would be a total of 2, with both in the major. This change is justified by the increase focus on writing in the core curriculum and the elimination of courses “double-counting” as both a writing-oriented core curricular course and a WAC course.

Additionally, an Ad-Hoc Committee reviewed the WAC requirements last academic year and produced new guidelines which were approved by faculty senate. Those new guidelines will continue to be used.

Course Approvals

More information about the timeline and course approval process will be provided after the committee submits their proposal

Effect on transfer students/transition plan

Because the new core will line up with OT-36, it will be easier for transfer students than the current system. For the most part, nothing has changed, but where it has, it will ease transfers. For instance, the current ALAAME requirement is problematic for transfer students because they may transfer in 2 arts & humanities courses and 2 social science courses only to be asked to complete an additional one that meets the ALAAME requirements. This will no longer be required – although students who complete their core at CSU will complete a course with a non-Western perspective (the Global Human Perspectives requirement), because it is designated an arts & humanities course, students transferring in two or more arts & humanities courses will receive credit.

As for the transition from GenEd08 to the new Core, there is nearly a one-to-one mapping of requirements and so the core curriculum courses will be able to satisfy the GenEd08 requirements. There are a few places where there is a difference:

- GenEd08 requires a second math course, whereas the new Core does not. But since plenty of math courses will still be offered, this won't have any effect.
- GenEd08 currently includes a "US Diversity" requirement that is not in the Core. Plenty of courses in the core will nonetheless satisfy that requirement. Additionally, as that requirement can currently be met by completing a 300- or 400-level course, those courses would still be available separately from the core.

Core courses used by programs for licensure

The Core Curriculum Director reviewed this issue with (at least some of) the affected programs and it appears that there should be no issue with those programs still finding relevant core courses.

If it does turn out that there is a gap somewhere, the program could make use of replacement courses to have their students take a non-core course that covers the relevant content.