

Academic Governing Council
Decision Form

*This form is to be used when the Academic Governing Council makes a decision on an issue.
This form is sent to the Provost.*

Mandatory Placement for English as a Second Language (ESL) Courses

Decision

On March 15, 2016, the AGC membership voted to approve the following policy:

GRCC should require and enforce mandatory placement for ESL students.

Rationale

Students who place into ESL are currently not required to take ESL courses and can enroll in any courses. Data show lower success and persistence rates for students who place into but do not take ESL classes. Students who enroll in courses for which they are not prepared may not make satisfactory academic progress (SAP). This may lead to negative consequences for the student, including loss of financial aid, academic probation, and suspension.

Supporting Data

The Mandatory ESL Placement Team presented data showing lower retention, persistence, and success rates for students who place into but do not take recommended ESL classes. In preparing a policy to support lowest level readers, the Team benchmarked mandatory ESL placement policies at comparable academic institutions. Eight of eleven colleges benchmarked have mandatory placement for ESL courses; the remaining three have enforced ESL prerequisites. The proposed policy was presented to the AGC membership for discussion and feedback in January and February 2016. The proposal approved at the March 2016 AGC meeting reflects AGC member feedback.

Implications for Action

- Departments decide level of English proficiency needed for success in their programs and identify classes students can take concurrently with ESL.
- The GRCC Adult Education non-Credit ESL program serves “true beginners who speak, read, or understand no English.” The transition from Adult Education to credit ESL places students into levels 1 or 2 of the 4-level GRCC ESL Program.
- ESL courses are credit-bearing and can be used as elective credit toward AA or AS with/without MTA/MACRAO.

- Financial aid will pay for ESL classes if the student is enrolled in an eligible program of study. Financial aid for ESL does not have a 30-credit limit, as does Developmental Education.
- Currently, struggling ESL students are flagged for additional support services; the implementation phase could explore additional ways to identify and support students who require both ESL and Developmental Education.
- ESL students who cannot pass level 4 are not prepared for college courses; they will be referred to the College Success Center and possible Accuplacer / ALEKS testing.

Date of Decision by AGC

March 15, 2016

Vote: 70% yes, 21% no, 9% abstain

Section to be completed by the Provost.

Evaluation Plan

Before a more specific plan for the implementation and evaluation of this policy is formulated, several actions need to be taken by the ESL faculty and the English Department, in conjunction with other college stakeholders.

1. I am requesting that benchmarking and a review of the research, scholarship, and best practices around ESL curricula take place, with a particular focus on accelerated and integrated models. Specific details, timelines, and outcomes for this undertaking should be decided upon by the ESL faculty and the Department Head of English, in collaboration with the Dean of Arts and Sciences. I am requesting that this review of programming be undertaken in light of the fact that the ESL curriculum currently consists of twelve different courses (conceivably taking a student two years, maybe more, to complete) and much current research on the teaching of reading and writing focuses on acceleration and integration. The English Department already has undertaken similar (accelerated and integrated) work in its reading and writing curricula for native speakers. I also ask that this review of ESL curricula include any results of learning outcomes assessments from our current program.
2. After this review has been undertaken, and the parties have decided whether to revise existing curricula or not, whatever curricula are current will be made transparent to the faculty across the academic departments of the College so that they can determine what levels of ESL will be necessary for students to be successful in their courses and programs. The ESL faculty will need to create this detailed rubric. (The current course descriptions shared at AGC are not detailed enough for decision-making.) ESL faculty also will need to be willing to consult with and assist department faculty when interpreting their rubric and making decisions. When this rubric is created, the College will be able to move forward with a more specific implementation plan and timeline.

Response from Provost

I support the AGC vote. Before it can be implemented, however, the actions noted above under Evaluation Plan need to be completed. Each semester, I will provide information on the progress of this work in my updates to AGC on policy implementation.

Laurie Chesley

4-7-16