Response to the Draft “Common Core Structure” of November 1, 2011  
CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies  
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The Common Core does not satisfactorily address non-CUNY transfer credit issues nor does it address students’ needs in mathematical, scientific or foreign language literacy.

The Required 15 credit Core

1. 7 credits for **English Composition** are unrealistic; virtually every English Composition course in CUNY (and outside of CUNY) is offered for 3 credits. The requirement for English Composition should be 6 credits. [When the issue of 7 credits was posed the response was “there are a variety of ways one could reach 7 credits in English, for example, with a one-credit college success course.” A one-credit college success course, however, is not English Composition.]

2. 4 credits for **Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning** should be reduced to 3 credits. CUNY’s current Mathematics courses are mostly offered for 3 credits. While there are very few QR courses and those need to be developed, requiring 4 credits excludes the current CUNY and Non-CUNY 3-credit Math courses, and puts too much pressure on faculty to quickly develop new 4-credit options.

   [Attached: A NYT article recommending “Mathematical Literacy” in high school and college curricula; the concepts outlined here should be used as a guide:  

3. 4 credits for **Life and Physical Sciences** should also be reduced to 3 credits. CUNY offers many excellent 3-credit Science courses; the requirement for 4 credits in this area seems to indicate a requirement for a Lab section. Most students do not need to work in a Laboratory setting to learn about Science; moreover, CUNY does not have the facilities to require ever student to have a Lab section. Like Math, Life and Physical Sciences should be reconceived as Scientific Literacy.

   A solution for the 15 credits in this part of the Core could be:
   1. English Composition: 6 credits
   2. One Literature Course: 3 credits – after fulfilling the Composition requirement, students should be required to apply what they have learned – and gain further experience in writing – in a Literature course.
   3. Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning: 3 credits
   4. Life and Physical Sciences: 3 credits

The Flexible Common Core

We recommend that the Flexible Common Core be changed from 15 credits to 9 credits, wherein students take 3 courses from one of the 4 categories (with no more than 1 course
from any specific discipline or category). The other 6 credits should be made up of two semesters of a foreign language, e.g., Spanish 1 and Spanish 2.

As the Flexible Common Core is written, students who take the first semester of a foreign language to fulfill the World Cultures category could not use the second semester of the language. This will dissuade most students from continuing to the second semester. In this day of globalization, as well as CUNY’s drive to enhance Study Abroad options, this is shortsighted. One year of a language should be required. (Students who are exempted from language could be required to complete the 15-credit Flexible Core as written.)

Finally, it remains unclear how courses from outside CUNY especially will be identified as fulfilling the specific categories of World Cultures, US Experience in its Diversity, Creative Expression, and Individual and Society.

**Concern for non-CUNY Transfers**

The rationale for developing an efficient transfer system states: “CUNY must insure that students’ credits earned from any CUNY college transfer smoothly and efficiently to all other CUNY college.”

According to recent data it appears that about 47% of entering students are transfers from outside the CUNY system (almost 9,000 students out of a total of about 18,000 transfers in Fall 2010). Furthermore, although there is no CUNY-wide institutional research about how many credits on average non-CUNY students transfer, for CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies such non-CUNY students typically enter with about 60 transfer credits.

As a result, it will be imperative that a smooth, efficient and timely transfer process be developed in order for these non-CUNY students to understand the courses that will be applied particularly to the common core.

Will non-CUNY courses have to be articulated to specific courses offered at the matriculated college to satisfy the core? Or, will transfer equivalencies be disciplined based? For example, if specific psychology courses fulfill a designated core category, will ANY psychology course transferred from outside CUNY satisfy this core requirement? Will each college have its own way of dealing with this issue or will there be a CUNY-wide process on how to handle such transfer credits with regard to fulfilling the common core?

If there is no centralized process, then a non-CUNY transfer could potentially fulfill core requirements at one college but not at another, creating a chaotic scramble for transfers to find the best college for them in terms of fulfilling core requirements.
Representing almost half of all transfer students, non-CUNY transfers must be considered before implementing a “common core,” which appears to be focused exclusively on students transferring within CUNY rather than from outside the system.

Recommendations
For both ease of transfer and for a diverse education, we recommend the following Core, in some ways similar to the current CUNY BA Core:

**Required 15 Common Core, 15 credits**

1. English Composition I and II: 6 credits
2. One Literature Course: 3 credits – after fulfilling the Composition requirement, students should be required to apply what they have learned – and gain further experience in writing – in a Literature course.
3. Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning: 3 credits of any college-level Math or QR course
4. Life and Physical Sciences: 3 credits of any college-level Science course

**Flexible Common Core, 15 credits**
Rather than emphasize themes that will be difficult to determine from course titles and even descriptions:

1. One year of a Language (e.g., Spanish I and 2) – 6 credits
2. One Humanities course – 3 credits
3. One Social Science course – 3 credits
4. One Applied Creative Expression course (i.e., Intro to Painting, African Dance, Acting, etc.) – 3 credits

This proposed structure has the advantage of simplicity as well as diversity and would permit ease of transfer not only within CUNY but also from outside the system.