

Discussion: Streamlining the Core Curriculum to Support Student Success

November 2025

Simplifying Sections A-C of Core Curriculum in the Catalog

- Currently, sections A-C (which pertain to C, H, and S designations) are deeply entangled and cause several problems:
 - Students must take 36 credits of C designated courses (12 credits in major, 12 credits out of major, and 12 additional). Most students fulfill the additional 24 credits primarily through H and S courses.
 - Section A is simultaneously extremely burdensome compared to the approach at our peer institutions and inadequately rigorous (students often don't take any specific classes to learn writing and communication skills, which is really unusual).
 - The Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences department must make all classes C-intensive in order to meet the demands of section A, which limits teaching capacity (this is expensive) and limits how many students get to work with core faculty in the department (this is bad for retention and time to degree).

Proposal One: Simplifying Sections A-C of Core Curriculum in the Catalog (Continued)

- H and S courses are convoluted with swing courses and are often a high level number, which limits the number of transfer credits for students.
 - The requirement for upper-level courses places a high burden on transfer students (we currently have the most carveouts of any IAI school) and has had the result of inflating the levels of many courses that peer institutions offer at the 100 or 200 level.
- Humanities and Social Sciences often share a number of intellectual and epistemological approaches, which are often more similar at the lower level courses which should comprise the majority of the core.
 - There is significant overlap in LOs, and in a more unified approach, students would have more flexibility.

Summary of Proposal

- Remove the C designation requirement.
 - Enable C designation of courses to support writing in disciplines, ABET accreditation, and for students wishing to pursue the Distinguished Communicator Medal.
 - Still overseen by director of Communication Across the Curriculum.
- Bolster a 2-course COM sequence (COM 100, COM 200, which replaces COM 101 and HUM 200 requirements).
 - This is credit neutral to the core curriculum.
- Replace the separate H and S requirements with a Social and Humanistic Inquiry (SHI) requirement, totaling 15 credits
 - Current core curriculum requires 18 credits between H and S designated courses; proposal would decrease the number of credits required for this designation.
 - Realign course numbering required for the core to be achievable at predominately 100- and 200-level courses. This is in line with IAI and peer institutions.
- Enable double counting of classes in the SHI module towards both majors and minors,
 - Current core does not allow double counting towards majors.
- This moves the total credits required from A-C from 8 courses to 7 courses

Current Section A

- A. Writing and Communication
- Illinois Institute of Technology recognizes the importance of critical thinking, writing, and oral communication in all academic pursuits and in professional practice. Illinois Institute of Technology is committed to a campus-wide program that engages students in the practice of written and oral communication in all disciplines. This program includes the following components:
1. Basic Writing Proficiency (BWP). Incoming degree-seeking (not visiting or exchange) students are expected to have a basic level of writing skills, which Illinois Institute of Technology refers to as the BWP requirement. There are several ways for incoming students to demonstrate that they have met this requirement:
 - a) They can take an appropriate optional section of the ACT or SAT exam and pass it. Passing levels are:
 - 8 or higher on ACT Writing
 - 600 or higher on SAT Writing
 - 9 or higher on SAT Essay
 - 33 or higher on new SAT Writing and Language
 - b) They may present transfer or AP credit (4 or higher on the English Language exam) for [COM 101](#) Writing in the University.
 - c) If the BWP is not satisfied by either of these two methods, students must take the Illinois Tech Basic Writing Proficiency Examination before starting classes in their first semester. Passing the exam equals passing the BWP requirement.
 - d) Students who do not pass the BWP via the above methods must take and pass an approved composition course (Illinois Tech offers [COM 101](#) each regular semester) within their first academic year at the university.
 - e) Students who do not pass their Basic Writing Proficiency requirement in their first academic year are highly unlikely to be able to graduate on schedule. This is because passing the BWP is a prerequisite for enrolling in a required Humanities 200-level course, and passing a Humanities 200-level course is a prerequisite for enrolling in required 300- and 400-level Humanities and Social Sciences courses.
 2. Students must take and pass a writing instruction intensive 200-level Humanities course (see below), or present transfer or AP credit for such a course.
 3. Students must complete a minimum of 36 credit hours of courses with a significant written and oral communication component, identified with a **(C)** in this catalog, with a minimum distribution as follows:
 1. 12 credit hours in major courses.
 2. 12 credit hours in non-major courses.
 3. Full-time students should enroll in two **(C)**-designated courses, and part-time students should enroll in one **(C)**-designated course each academic year.
 4. Students must contact the [Illinois Tech Writing Center](#) when referred by course instructors or academic advisers.

Proposed Section A

The Writing and Communication sequence consists of two 3-credit courses:

- COM 100 Written Communication (3)
- COM 200 AI, Data, and Communication (3)

Students transferring in with communication credits evaluated at 100 and 200-level skills will be exempted from the content areas of COM 100 but not COM 200. AP and IB courses in English do not exempt a student from the two communication courses in the core curriculum. Credits accepted in AP and IB in English can count toward the Social and Humanistic Inquiry requirement at the 100-level.

The content, structure, and assignments for all sections of COM 100 and COM 200 are overseen by the First Year Writing (FYW) director.

Current Sections B and C

B. Humanities 200-Level Course

All students must complete one of the following courses:

- HUM 200
- HUM 202
- HUM 204
- HUM 206
- HUM 208
- Or any other HUM 200 Elective.

A. Human Sciences Module

All students must complete 18 credit hours subject to the following distribution requirements:

- At least two Humanities courses ((**H**) designation) at the 300-level or above. Students may use foreign language courses at the intermediate and advanced level to fulfill 300-level requirements.
- At least three Social or Behavioral Sciences courses. These courses are marked with an (**S**) in this catalog. The courses must be distributed as follows:
 - At least two courses at the 300-level or above.
 - Courses from at least two different fields.
- The remaining course in this module must be selected from any Humanities (**H**) course, any Social or Behavioral Science (**S**) course, or any COM course except COM 101 or COM 111.
- Courses required by and/or applied toward the major or entailed minor requirements of a degree program cannot be used to satisfy the Human Sciences Module of the Core Curriculum except where specifically allowed in certain programs.¹

Proposed Combined Sections B and C

B. Social and Humanistic Inquiry

All undergraduate students complete a minimum of 15 credits in Social and Humanistic Inquiry (SHI) with at least 6 of these credits at the 200-level or higher.

By the completion of this requirement, students will be able to:

- Articulate questions about human expressions and experiences.
- Use the language, fundamental concepts, theory or methods of one or more of representative disciplines
- Demonstrate critical thinking about human behavior and society to offer meaningful explanations of social and individual behavior.
- Produce original work of creative expression (e.g., argumentative research paper, fine arts, creative writing.)

Credits accepted in AP and IB in can count toward the SHI requirement at the 100 level. The remaining credits must be completed while enrolled at Illinois Tech or may be transferred from another accredited college or university.

All courses taken for this requirement can double count toward minors and majors.

Rationale: Fun with Money!

We are better situated in terms of staffing to offer this proposed core than the legacy core; the proposed core is also better aligned to peer standards. Further, we can save a lot of money.

Rationale: More Fun with Money!

Reminder:

Currently, students are required to take COM 101, HUM 200, and then 6 additional classes (8 classes total) spread across humanities and social sciences, at least half of which must be at the 300 level or higher. All classes must be communication-intensive, which means all are capped at 25 students. Classes in a major cannot fulfill HASS requirements, which means many students need additional HASS classes (since, for example, a technical communication class taken towards a CS degree can't also count towards the core).

Under the proposed changes, students would instead take a 2-course COM sequence plus 5 additional courses in SHI. Only the COM sequence would be communication intensive, enabling larger caps for some classes, particularly at the 200 level. Additionally, classes would be able to "double count" towards both the core and a major, and students would not be required to take upper level classes in the core.

Rationale: More Fun with Money!

Capacity:

Currently, HASS full-time faculty (with some additional courses from business and psychology) have the capacity to teach 41.5 sections total each semester, which with the 25-person cap means a 1,037.5-seat capacity each term; however, the need is approximately 3,068 seats per term, meaning that the department must offer approximately 123 sections of HASS courses. **This creates a need for 80 or more sections taught by adjuncts, which costs approximately \$611,250 per semester.** This is, again, because currently 100% of HASS classes should ideally be 25 or fewer students.

Under the proposed changes, approximately 50% of classes could have an enrollment of 50 students, since they would not need to be communication intensive. Additionally we assume that 25% of classes would be COM sequence classes capped at 20 with the remaining 25% of classes being upper-level classes capped at 25 (on average).

With the same 41.5 sections offered by full-time faculty, capacity can go up to 1,504 seats per semester. Assuming the need remains approximately 3,068 seats per semester; the department would only need approximately 90 sections total (versus 123 sections), with **49 to be taught by adjuncts, which cost approximately \$367,500 per semester, for a savings of \$243,750 each semester or \$487,500 per year.** It is possible greater savings could be realized since students would also be better able to transfer in credits to fulfill these requirements.

This is continuous improvement based on assessment data

1. At least **50% more students each semester would be taught by full-time faculty**. Contact with full-time faculty is linked to improvements in both academic performance and student retention.
2. The **curriculum would be significantly friendlier to transfer students**; currently most students have a large number of "fall through" courses due to the core's top-heavy course requirements.
3. **Communication instruction would be more structured, rigorous, and consistent**; the C-designation program could be streamlined and revamped to support the Distinguished Communicator medal program, which is value added for students.
4. **HASS would have greater ability to teach to programmatic needs** in public policy, GEM, communication.
5. Students would have **greater flexibility in fulfilling their requirements, and, in some cases, have greater flexibility in their degrees in general** since classes could "double count."

This is for conversational purposes as we work towards continuous improvement.