



UKCORE 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT
June 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE UKCEC CHAIR

In beginning my journey as Chair of the UK Core Education Committee (UKCEC) in February 2019, I spoke with President Eli Capilouto, Provost David Blackwell, and Senate Chair Jennifer Bird-Pollan to learn about their commitment to the UK Core and to better understand how I could help in carrying forward the university's goal of a quality core education experience for students. During that conversation, I shared the idea of a year of listening followed by a year of action for the UKCEC. This annual report marks the watershed moment between the two, with 2019-2020 as the year of listening and 2020-2021 as a year of action. I hope that you find value in hearing a bit about our lessons learned in this report and see how they serve as a foundation for the year of action to come.

I am delighted, as always, to find great colleagues who share a passion for core education as both an intellectual construct and a practical foundation for student education at UK. The committee members alongside whom I have served this past year have joined me as we have listened and heard comments from students, staff, faculty, alumni, and industry leaders about ideals of core education and, specifically, the efficacy of the core at the University of Kentucky. I am grateful for their deep thinking, their careful considerations of proposals as area experts, and their advocacy for the importance of a broad-based education alongside disciplinary training.

As faculty, we each share in the responsibility to ensure a quality experience for students in the offering and delivery of courses across a wide range of topics. The University Senate adopted the current UKCore configuration in 2011. In the decade since, many faculty have participated in the development and delivery of courses. Though the UKCore does not belong to a particular college, we do need to recognize the significant contribution of the College of Arts & Sciences in delivering the majority of the courses. Many additional colleges have offerings within the UKCore and it is those offerings that we each share in the liberal education mission of the UKCore.

I am pleased to report that the UK Core Education Committee has had a busy year, including:

- [1] customary approvals of both revised and new courses throughout the year;
- [2] conversations with constituent groups across the campus;
- [3] an analysis of data from each of the areas within the UKCore;
- [4] deliberations about assessment for the UKCore;
- [5] successes in more holistically introducing the UKCore at new student orientation
- [6] identification of enrichment opportunities for UKCore instructors;
- [7] focus on better communications in many forms with the campus.

I hope each of you has the opportunity to read in more detail about these accomplishments as we move from the year of listening to the year of action.

Cheers,



Patrick Lee Lucas, Associate Professor, Interiors
Chair, UK Core Education Committee

WHO'S ON THE COMMITTEE?

By University Senate rules, the UKCEC is comprised of area experts and staff in recognition of the breadth of the impact of the UKCore. Each area expert reviews a proposed course and makes a recommendation to the full UKCEC for review and action. Current committee members include:

Joshua Abboud, Assistant Professor, Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies
Composition and Communication Area Expert

Stefan Bird-Pollan, Associate Professor, Philosophy
Community, Culture and Citizenship in the USA Area Expert

Renee Fatemi, Professor, Physics and Astronomy
Natural, Mathematical, and Physical Sciences Area Expert

Mark Gebert, Senior Lecturer, Statistics
Statistical Inferential Reasoning Area Expert

Kim Miller-Spillman, Associate Professor, Retailing and Tourism Management
Global Dynamics Area Expert

Jack Schmidt, Senior Lecturer, Mathematics
Quantitative Foundations Area Expert

Rachel Shane, Associate Professor, Arts Administration
Arts & Creativity Area Expert

Melissa Stein, Associate Professor, Gender and Women's Studies
Humanities Area Expert

Keiko Tanaka, Professor, Community and Leadership Studies
Social Sciences Area Expert

Jessalyn Vallade, Assistant Professor, Information Science
Composition and Communication Area Expert

Yazan Orabi, Pre-Finance
Student Member

Asante Ruiz, Foreign Language/International Economics
Student Member

Mike Rudolph, Director, Institutional Effectiveness
Office of Assessment Representative (ex-officio)

Mike Shanks, Associate Registrar, Enrollment Management
Enrollment Management Representative (ex-officio)

Debbie Sharp, Director of Information Literacy, University Libraries
University Libraries Representative (ex-officio)

COURSES APPROVED OR REVISED IN 2019-2020

One of the great pleasures of membership on the UKCEC is the opportunity to observe the creativity in scholarship and teaching as faculty make proposals for new and revised courses. As a committee, we are grateful for our talented colleagues who continue to offer seminal experiences to students in one of the UKCore areas.

UKC Prefix (Experimental Courses)

UKC 114 – “Game-Set-Match: How Sport (De)Scribes the World”

UKC 115 – “Writing Nature”

UKC 116 – “The Ethics of a Human Life”

UKC 183 – “Oral History in Civil Rights Kentucky”

UKC 192 – “Catastrophes and Calamities in the Greco-Roman World and Afterwards”

UKC 380 – “History of Misinformation”

Revised courses:

EGR 101 – “Engineering Exploration I”

EGR 103 – “Engineering Exploration II”

EGR 215 – “Introduction to the Practice of Engineering for Transfer Students”

EPE 174DL – “Theories of College Student Success”

GEN 100 – “Issues in Agriculture, Food and Environment”

GRN 250 – “Aging in Today’s World”

HIS 295 – “East Asia to 1800”

HJS 326 – “The Jewish Experience in America”

HJS 327 – “Women in Judaism”

HON 151 – “Honors in Humanities”

HON 152 – “Honors in Natural, Physical and Mathematical Sciences”

HON 251 – “Honors in Social Sciences”

HON 252 – “Honors in Arts and Creativity”

KHP 230 – “Human Health and Wellness”

PPL 201 – “Introduction to Public Policy”

PSY 160DL – “Human Sexuality”

TA 150 – “Creativity and the Art of Design & Production”

New courses:

BSC 152 – “You, Me, Myself, and I: Psychosocial Influences on Health”

EES 190DL – “A Climate for Change”

ENT 220DL – “Plague, Pests, and Pestilence: History and Global Perspective”

GEO 210 – “How the Internet Works: Understanding Digital Places and People”

GEO 362 – “Conserving Global Environments”

GEO 372 – “Health Environment Geography”

HIS 315 – “America in the Cold War, 1945-1991”

HJS 100 – “Introduction to Judaism”

HJS 180 – “Holocaust Film”

HJS 210 – “Introduction to Jewish Literature”

HJS 328 – “Representing the Holocaust”

JOU 208 – “Issues in 21st Century Sports Journalism”

MI 120 – “Microbes and Society”

PHI 135 – “The Ethics of a Human Life”

PHI 160 – “Science, War, and the Fate of the World”

LISTENING SESSIONS

During the Fall Semester 2019, the members of the UKCEC met with various constituent groups: students, staff, faculty, alumni, and leaders in the community. The UKCEC members focused these conversations on understandings of the current UKCore framework and the perception of core education in the public sphere and the business world. A summary of the big takeaways follows:

- [1] the UKCore represents 25% of the academic student experience;
- [2] the UKCore has no single story and many hold different perceptions of its value;
- [3] the UKCore requirements are often viewed as a checklist, not as intentional/strategic actions by students and advisors to support student learning outside of disciplinary training;
- [4] the AP/transfer credit landscape has changed vastly since 2011, greatly impacting the number of UKCore credits students bring to the institution;
- [5] there has been curricular drift in the UKCore courses since time of their review since 2011 and there exists no process for recertification;
- [6] there exists a lack of development/training for those teaching in the core;
- [7] the quality of UKCore courses vary widely;
- [8] some UKCore courses are restricted to majors only, resulting in the breadth of experience and the mixing of students outside of the major;
- [9] there appear to be no real incentives for teaching in the UKCore;
- [10] UKCore assessment is, at best, uneven but not necessarily reliable/useful;
- [11] UKCore program has not been the subject of a program review since its 2011 inception;
- [12] communications about the UKCore with students, faculty, advisors, administrators are at a low level;
- [13] there have been few ongoing conversations about UKCore as the responsibility of faculty as a whole;
- [14] currently the UKCore has no administrative home and cannot thrive as the “job” for a volunteer committee one hour/month;
- [15] outside of the salaries for faculty and staff who teach, the UKCore stands as an unfunded administrative mandate required by SACS/CPE.

Beyond the big takeaways, individuals articulated some additional issues worth consideration in long-range planning:

- [16] University requirements for graduation (Graduation Communication and Composition Requirement, Foreign Language Requirement) are currently not listed or talked about as UKCore experiences or related to UKCore in articulate or explicit ways;
- [17] energy seems to be building for UK101/201 and a majority of first-year students and transfer students take the course, making these two courses nearly another hidden university requirement not currently articulated in UKCore;
- [18] the common read, in the past, also represented a UKCore-like experience;
- [19] the question of visual literacy has ever more importance in the current political, social, and cultural context;
- [20] there is a direct correlation of UKCore and an impact to time of degree;
- [21] the UKCore is not holistically addressed in orientation for new students, new faculty, and any kind of training for returning faculty;
- [22] there is a context of low value of liberal education by legislators, employers, students, and parents.

How will what we heard in these sessions help inform our future work? The UKCEC talked about these observations as a way to frame a plan for the “year of action” in 2020-2021. Stay tuned for email updates and other communications of the UKCEC as we undertake our “year of action” at the beginning of term in the fall.

PANDEMIC CONTEXT

In April 2020, the UKCEC was involved in the discussions about pass/fail options for students enrolled in UKCore courses during the spring semester 2020. Seeing an opportunity to help support students as they navigated a much different academic landscape, the UKCEC endorsed the proposal of the Senate Council for the P/F option. Beyond that important action as the pandemic unfolded, the UKCEC is keenly aware of the importance of the UKCore for students as they build foundational skills – some of the very skills necessary in such a public health crisis: teamwork and collaboration, a fundamental understanding of the human condition, interpretive capability in working with statistics, and above all the ability to communicate. No matter the mode of delivery or changes to the academic calendar, the UKCEC recognizes the importance of a quality experience in the UKCore as a fundamental aspect of all students at the University of Kentucky.

A WORD (OR TWO) ON ASSESSMENT

As a result of the concerns about workload that changed due to COVID-19, the Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (OSPIE) set aside the usual collection of artifacts required of all faculty teaching UKCore courses. As we look ahead to the academic year 2020-2021, we look forward to partnering with OSPIE to both collect and assess artifacts for the UKCore. In recognition of the request from many at the listening sessions for better communications, look for a summer mailing explaining the assessment timeline in 2020-2021.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the steady agenda items for the UKCEC this year has been a review of data on courses in each area of the UKCore. The purpose of this review was, quite frankly, a little self-education for the members of the UKCEC. We learned a lot about the particular opportunities and challenges in each discrete aspect of the UKCore... and we learned that all of the elements of the UKCore, as conceived and in practice, certainly had interrelationships that are not as obvious from a surface view of the UKCore. Particularly in light of the feedback we heard from many about the various understandings of the UKCore program across the campus, what follows here is a bullet point list of some of the interesting things we uncovered.

Across the Areas

- Between 225-250 UKCore courses are taught each semester.
- Around 15,000 students on average enroll in a UKCore course each fall and spring semester, making it the single largest academic program on campus.
- A wide range of individuals teach in the UKCore: full-time faculty, part-time instructors, graduate students, and staff (see below for specific percentages in individual areas of the UKCore).
- The popularity of a course appears to be independent of average success in a course.

Arts & Creativity

- 55% of A&C courses are offered by the College of Fine Arts.
- DEFW rates in A&C average 9-11%.

Community, Culture and Citizenship in the USA

- Top Colleges teaching CCC from 2013-18 include: A&S 929 sections, CAFE 131, Public Health 41, Communications 33.
- About half the instructors in CCC are fulltime instructors.

Humanities

- The College of Fine Arts teaches the largest number of humanities core courses by far, followed by Arts & Sciences.
- Grad students and part-time instructors teach around half the courses in this area.

Natural, Physical and Mathematical Sciences

- 75% of the enrollment in NPM core is in 8 classes (2 CHEM, 2 BIO and 4 PHYSICS) with the VAST majority of students enrolled because they are major requirements.
- For NPM core courses that do not serve as major requirements, students overwhelmingly choose either ANTH 230 or AST 191 but we are not sure why.

Statistical Inferential Reasoning

- The Statistics and Biostatistics departments together accounted for 1,259 of the 1,322 sections of SIR class course sections taught; Psychology has the next most, 291.
- The DEFW rate in all SIR courses has declined only slightly (18.1% to 13.0%) since its introduction in Fall 2011.

Global Dynamics

- If a student has tried to make substitutions elsewhere and failed, then they will try GD, most especially if they have studied abroad.
- Measuring the actual amount of GD credit is difficult to trace partly as GD is a bit of a catch-all category.

Quantitative Foundations

- 92% of students take a “traditional math class”, 8% take logic, and a few take data based courses in forestry and geography;
- Class sizes in the 8 QF courses are typically 100 to 150, taught by faculty, with either 20-30 person or 50-70 person break-out sessions led by faculty or graduate student teaching assistants.

Composition and Communication

- Graduate teaching assistants, part-time instructors, or temporary faculty taught 73% of CCI courses in Arts & Sciences (Fall 2019) and 94.3% of CCII courses in Arts & Sciences (Spring 2020).
- Graduate teaching assistants, part-time instructors, or temporary faculty taught 50% of CCI courses in Communication and Information (Fall 2019) and 59% of CCII courses in Communication and Information (Spring 2020).
- From Fall 2011 to Fall 2019, DEFW rates in Arts & Sciences have ultimately declined from 13.6% to 9.8% for WRD 110 and from 7.3% to 5.0% in WRD 111. In Communication and Information, DEFW rates have declined from 12.5% to 5.9% for CIS 110 and from 7.7% to 4.7% in CIS 111.



some endnotes...

One of our favorite metaphors when we think of UKCore is the idea of a core experience like an apple ...all of the DNA that the apple needs as seeds in the center surrounded by the fleshy fruit as both a way to protect the core and as nutrients to spur the growth of the seeds along.

Plus...

an apple a day is apparently good for you ...and we like the symbolism of an apple as the gift to a great teacher.

So, starting with the red apple, this colors represented in this report reference another idea when we think of UKCore, that of an education across the spectrum, represented in this report as the classic red-orange-yellow-green-blue-indigo-violet scheme.

We'd like to hear from you...

As we conclude our "year of listening," we are curious about your thinking on the UKCore.

Any ideas you have that have been spurred by reading this annual report? What issues should we be addressing that haven't been touched on herein? Anything else we need to know?

Drop us a line and let us know what you are thinking.

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