

General Education Committee
Report #2015-16-12
April 21, 2016

At the March 3 and April 7, 2016 General Education Committee Meetings, the Committee discussed and voted to eliminate **University Manual Section 8.20.15** from the description of the General Education Program.

8.20.15 Eligible students may have the requirement waived in any of the Competencies (B) or Responsibilities (C) of the Student Learning Outcomes by successfully passing a proficiency test before the beginning of their second semester of full-time registration. The General Education Committee shall determine criteria for eligibility no later than February of each year so that new students may be notified of these criteria as part of their Orientation. In February, the departments also shall report on these criteria and the results of the current year's proficiency testing to the General Education Committee.

In 2014, Section 8.20.15 was written to replace Section 8.20.12 from the former program.

8.20.12 All baccalaureate students shall be required to take six credits in courses that improve written and oral communication skills. This English Communication requirement includes at least three credits devoted specifically to courses designed to improve written communication skills. Courses which are appropriate for fulfilling the English Communication requirement in general shall be designated "(EC)" and courses which are appropriate for fulfilling the written English Communication requirement shall be designated "(ECw)" in the University Catalog. Only one 100-level writing (ECw) course may be included in satisfying the six-credit English Communication requirement. However, students who complete two 100-level writing courses in the English Language Studies program may count both courses toward the English Communication requirement. For information on having this requirement waived by proficiency examination see 8.20.19.

Rationale:

The Department of Modern Languages no longer offers proficiency waivers, and although the Department of Writing and Rhetoric currently offers proficiency tests to students who have high SAT scores, there are very few students who take advantage of the waiver.

Students who pass the Writing proficiency test do not have to take WRT 104 and they receive non-transferable General Education credits for the course under the current program. The new outcomes-based Gen Ed program calls into question the efficacy of the exam.

From the Department of Writing and Rhetoric:

“Students who are proficient writers can benefit from taking a class with the Write Effectively outcome, and no one should get a pass on this. But the exam is also an anachronism since it ignores current writing theories and best practices. With the challenges of learning to write in a discipline-specific area, even first-year writing classes are inadequate. Most students need at least one more writing-intensive course beyond FYC. Multiple opportunities with different situations is the only way people improve their writing. This exam is based on an outdated view of what writing proficiency is. One example of a student's writing, produced in timed conditions and with limited choices, does not offer a complete picture of her writing abilities.”

Removing 8.20.15 from the Manual will in effect allow Writing and Rhetoric to fully integrate their offerings into the new General Education program and strengthen students' writing competencies.