

**Comments on the current Pathways Proposal for
Common Core Areas and Flexible Common Credits
Philosophy Discipline Council
13 October 2011**

The CUNY-wide Philosophy Council has met to discuss the most recent version of the proposals being put forward by the Pathways initiative's working committee, with particular regard to the ongoing discussion about Common Core Areas and related Flexible Common Credits. We respectfully submit the following observations and suggestions, in a spirit of collegiality and concern for the quality of undergraduate education at CUNY.

Common core required areas:

It seems to us that it would be best to slightly modify the denominations of the three required areas of the common core, to better reflect the broad educational goals connected to each area, and also so that the designations fit better with acknowledged differences and similarities among the concerned academic disciplines. In particular, we suggest to:

- a) Change the name of the first area from English Composition to Writing and Communication. This more inclusive nomenclature would avoid a potentially misleading disciplinary emphasis and would broaden the pedagogical opportunities provided by the common core.
- b) Change the name of the second area from Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning to Mathematical and Analytical Reasoning. (Notice that there is no meaningful distinction to be made between mathematical and quantitative reasoning.)
- c) Change the name of the third area from Natural and Physical Sciences to Practice and Understanding of Science (Notice that there is no meaningful distinction between natural and physical sciences.)

Flexible credits:

We respectfully submit that, as currently outlined, the four areas in this group (particularly areas 2 and 4), do not reflect the stated goal of the Pathways initiative to promote broad thematic areas, and they will likely infringe on curricular level decisions. These themes should not prejudice against either interdisciplinary courses or standard introductory courses in the disciplines contributing to the Common Core. Moreover, we were confused by the listing of individual disciplines within each theme, as this directly contravenes one of the stated goals of the committee itself, namely to focus on learning outcomes rather than disciplines.

We propose the following as examples of broadening changes for the flexible credits themes, each of which would broaden the focus and help make the themes more relevant to our students' education:

- Theme 1: Change from World Cultures to Cultures, Traditions and Ways of Life.
- Theme 2: Change from U.S. Experience in its Diversity to The American Experience.
- Theme 3: Change from Creative Expression to Creativity and Ethical Values.
- Theme 4: Change from Individual and Society to Individual in the Social and Natural Worlds.

We realize that the working committee will have to consider a variety of comments and proposals from a number of sources, and that the final result will inevitably be a compromise among many voices. Nevertheless, we are confident that our suggestions are constructive and would move the Pathways initiative in the right direction for the benefit of our students.

Respectfully,

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Adopted at the meeting of the Philosophy Discipline Council, 12 October 2011, by unanimous vote of those present, whose signatures appear above