

AP/IB Core Working Group Report and Recommendations

The AP/IB Core Working Group, consisted of Jeremy Kua, Stacy Langton and Yi Sun, surveyed a number of departments in Sciences, Math and Computer Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, departments that are currently affected by USD's AP/IB credit policy. We asked the departments to examine and reevaluate their existing policies in light of the fact that the AP classes are generally more content-oriented while our new core courses are based more on process and learning outcomes. We also asked the departments to explain their rationale for either maintaining or changing their policies regarding the impact of the new core on the way they accept or count AP/IB credits. Of particular importance is how they would reconcile the possible disparity between the new core courses offered by the various departments and the pre-USD AP/IB courses in terms of learning outcomes.

Based on the extensive feedback from the departments, we learned that the Humanities departments, as well as Political Science and Math/Computer Science, are generally satisfied with their current AP/IB policies, which are deemed to be in line with the learning outcomes outlined by the various ATFs as well as USD's benchmark schools, and that they wish to retain their current policies. Some departments have articulated the need to revisit their curriculum as a whole, which would in turn affect their assessment of AP/IP credits. For instance, AP Biology is unlikely to satisfy the Science and Technology Inquiry, though the department thinks that units may still be awarded for elective credit based on its content coverage. The Biology Department is in discussion about how to reorganize their lower division entry level courses. In Physics, the current AP scores give students credit either in PHYS 136 or PHYS 270. At present the department does examine individual lab books, and there is much larger variation in whether the AP course is inquiry-based or satisfies the minimal 40% lab hour proposal in the ATF report. Therefore, the inclination is that AP will not satisfy STI, however, credit can still be awarded to students for satisfying the content knowledge equivalent to PHYS 136 and PHYS 270.

The information we have gathered has led us to the following recommendations:

1. Individual departments are best poised to recommend if a particular AP/IB class and score in their fields will satisfy the learning outcomes in the various Core Inquiries.
2. Individual departments should revisit their current policies once the new core takes effect in fall 2017. It is important to bring the small number of courses currently affected by AP/IB credit transfer into alignment with the new learning outcomes with necessary adjustments. There may be cases where an AP class will satisfy the requirements for an elective course or even have an equivalent class at USD but may not meet the learning outcomes of a Core course. In such a case, the AP credit can be transferred as elective credit, but not Core credit.

3. Since the Inquires are not necessarily departmental specific, the departments can recommend but not mandate the final decision over whether a particular AP/IB course/score will satisfy the Core requirement in a particular Inquiry. However, the departments' recommendations should receive serious consideration by the appropriate body (ATF or CCC).
4. Given the new challenges outlined by the admissions office about recruiting good students to USD, any proposed changes should not adversely affect admissions.

Respectively submitted:

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