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# Corequisite English Design Principles

## Principle 1. Corequisite English Objective

The objective of a corequisite English program is to ensure that each student:

- 1.1 Enrolls in the college-level English course.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 Has access to additional academic and non-academic support, as needed.
- 1.3 Receives those supports through just-in-time instruction and other campus resources.
- 1.4 Completes the college-level English course with the relevant reading, writing, and critical thinking competencies essential to success in college.

The overall goal of the corequisite English program is to provide support for students to be successful in college-level English. Corequisites serve as an alternative to these students being placed into traditional prerequisite developmental education English courses or being denied access to college-level English courses due to flawed placement practices. Corequisites place a special emphasis on providing access and encouraging the success of students historically minoritized by race, ethnicity, poverty, age, or other factors so that they can realize their academic and career goals and achieve economic mobility and income equity. Research has shown that completion of college-level English in the first academic year is a critical early momentum point for students on their path toward degree attainment, certificate completion, and transfer.<sup>2, 3, 4</sup>

## Principle 2. Corequisite English Course Design Process

Institutions that successfully implement a corequisite English course:

- 2.1 Identify and dismantle barriers in policy and practice that deny students access to college-level English courses, and result in inequitable student outcomes. Dismantling such policies and practices ensures that each student has equal access to, and can successfully engage in, high-quality, college-level English courses in their first year.
- 2.2 In order to anticipate and resolve challenges in implementation, involve key institutional stakeholders including administrators, faculty, instructional designers, counselors/advisors, information technology specialists, student support services, English as a Second Language (ESL) department, financial aid professionals, Disabled Students Programs and Services,

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<sup>1</sup> Students who are newer English language learners should be directed to an appropriate English as a Second Language (ESL) course with a clear, streamlined path to college-level English.

<sup>2</sup> Cuellar Mejia, Rodriguez, Johnson, & Brooks, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Cuellar Mejia, Rodriguez, & Johnson, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Complete College America, 2021.



students, institutional researchers, and registrars during the design, implementation, assessment, and scaling of corequisite courses.

- 2.3 Conduct qualitative and quantitative research in order to better understand the postsecondary experiences and support needs of students on their campuses, paying particular attention to minoritized and marginalized communities, and use this understanding in design and continuous improvement decisions.
- 2.4 Engage in meaningful and respectful conversations and professional development to encourage faculty and staff to fully engage in the implementation, assessment, and scaling of corequisite courses. Faculty and staff should examine the data and research that support the need to replace prerequisite developmental education courses with corequisite programs.
- 2.5 Involve all stakeholders in discussions on how to integrate English and reading departments and courses with each other.
- 2.6 Work with the ESL department to determine a clear, streamlined pathway from ESL to college-level English and develop strategies for continuing to support English language learners within mainstream English courses and corequisite programs.

### Principle 3. Corequisite English Course Design Elements

Essential elements of effective corequisite English course design include:

- 3.1 Enrollment of students directly into college-level English course without prerequisite completion so that support content is provided in a single term, concurrent with the college-level course or embedded within the college-level course.
- 3.2 Sections of the college-level course with corequisite supports are identical in content and outcomes to those available to students in non-corequisite sections.
- 3.3 Policy stating that successfully completing the college-level course, regardless of the grade earned in the corequisite support course, is the only requirement for students to earn college-level credit and move on to subsequent courses in the English pathway or to other courses with a college-level English prerequisite.

Other corequisite English course design elements depend upon the needs of the student population and institutional context. Institutional teams examine available research on effective practices along with local data to make decisions on:

- 3.4 Carefully considering one- and two-instructor models:
  - The one-instructor model, where a single instructor teaches both the support and college-level courses, is most common and can more easily facilitate seamless integration of support into the college-level course as well as coherence and consistency for students. There is strong evidence that this approach produces superior outcomes to the two-instructor model, especially with students from minoritized communities.<sup>5</sup>
  - The two-instructor model may be necessary in some institutional settings and can allow for greater flexibility in staff assignments and schedules. In a two-instructor

<sup>5</sup> Denley, 2021.

model, it is essential that sections of the support course and college-level courses follow a common schedule and that there is frequent communication and collaboration between instructors so that the corequisite course does not become a stand-alone developmental education course.

- 3.5 Determining the number of credit hours for the corequisite sections, with the intention of limiting the adverse impacts of additional credit hours while ensuring that students receive appropriate support. There is strong evidence that having two corequisite hours produces superior results to having one corequisite support hour.<sup>6</sup>
- 3.6 Deciding whether to use a co-mingled model (co-enrolling corequisite students in college-level sections with students who do not require corequisite support) or a cohort model (offering college-level sections to corequisite students only). There is strong evidence that a cohort model, when combined with a one-instructor model and common assessments are used across sections with and without support, produces superior results to a comingled model.<sup>7</sup>
- 3.7 Scheduling corequisite sections relative to the college-level course (e.g., same day as college-level, just before college-level, immediately following college-level).
- 3.8 Which faculty, in addition to English faculty, are assigned to teach the college-level English course and the linked corequisite course (e.g., faculty with subject matter expertise in related disciplines such as Reading, Basic Skills, and ESL).

## Principle 4. Corequisite English Curriculum Elements

Essential elements of effective corequisite English program curriculum include:

- 4.1 Content and activities in the corequisite course that support the work in the college-level course rather than recreate developmental course content.
- 4.2 Content in the corequisite support course that is explicitly aligned and organized to support student learning and success in the college-level course through scaffolding of college-level reading and writing assignments.
- 4.3 Consistent instructional practices across the college-level English course and corequisite support course that affirm students' cultures, experiences, voices, and languages, in order to achieve equitable outcomes for students, regardless of race, income, age, gender, or other minoritized status.
- 4.4 Opportunities for students to develop their reading and writing skills over the course of the semester through practices such as portfolios, revision assignments, collaborative work, and low-stakes assignments. Students who struggle with early writing assignments should have the opportunity to successfully complete the course as their skills improve.
- 4.5 Socio-emotional supports that teach strategies in the corequisite support course intentionally aimed to boost students' writing confidence and sense of purpose for the material, build a sense of community and social belonging in the classroom and beyond, and promote effective academic habits and mindsets.

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<sup>6,7</sup> Denley, 2021.

- 4.6 Reading supports that help students develop the skills necessary to critically analyze readings and respond to them in their own academic writing. While some assignments may use relevant fiction as source material, the majority of the writing assignments are based on non-fiction texts that students can engage with critically, including articles, books, and book chapters. Relevance to students' lives, interests, and goals should be considered in text selection.
- 4.7 Writing supports that provide just-in-time remediation of fundamental writing skills, such as grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation, which are purposefully taught in the context of college-level reading and writing assignments. Additionally, fundamentals of essay structure, such as thesis statements and integrating source-based evidence, are taught in the context of essay and other writing-intensive assignments.

## Principle 5. Course Enrollment Practices

Institutions that successfully deliver the instruction that students need to achieve their academic goals:

- 5.1 Discontinue offering English courses below the transferable or gateway college-level course.
- 5.2 Determine the need for corequisite support through the use of evidence-based measures, including high school GPA. Research has shown that high school GPA is more predictive of success in college-level English than standardized assessments.
- 5.3 Make informed decisions about whether corequisite support is mandatory for students when the evidence-based measures referenced above show corequisite support will increase the likelihood that they will pass the college-level course. Institutional teams should examine available research on effective practices along with local data, when available, to make this determination.
- 5.4 Place English language learners who graduated from a U.S. high school directly into college-level English (with or without corequisite support). Work closely with their ESL department to establish clear and effective pathways for other English language learners to enroll in college-level English courses.

## Principle 6. Integration with a Comprehensive Student Success Framework

Institutions that implement comprehensive student success frameworks:

- 6.1 Include corequisite English support as an essential strategy for increasing the likelihood that students achieve critical first-year momentum metrics, including completion of gateway math and English, earning 30 credits, and enrolling into and earning at least nine credits in a program of study in their first academic year. This reform requires collaboration between instruction and student services to encourage students to enroll in the transfer-level English course, with or without the corequisite support course, in their first year.
- 6.2 Integrate the corequisite support course into a comprehensive student success and support network focusing on first-year students, which can include tutoring, counseling, career resources, health center, library, first-year experience courses, learning communities,



orientation programs, etc.

- 6.3 Intentionally integrate the corequisite support course into Guided Pathways<sup>8</sup> planning and implementation efforts. Institutions may consider linking some college-level English courses and corequisite courses with different meta-majors.
- 6.4 Include placement reform and the development of corequisite English courses in the institution's larger equity plans.

## Principle 7. Continuous Improvement

Institutions that deliver an equitable, high-quality learning experience that maximizes the success of each student:

- 7.1 Establish clear measures of success that include the numbers and percentages of students completing a college-level English course, and establish mid- and long-term measures such as retention, success in subsequent courses, and completion of a certificate or degree. To gauge the impact of corequisite courses, institutions should compare the college-level course success rate of students in the corequisite program to the previous throughput rates<sup>9</sup> of students in stand-alone developmental courses.
- 7.2 Collect, analyze, and act upon disaggregated quantitative data that measure the impact of placement/assessment policies and other relevant institutional or state policies on the success of students, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, income level, gender, age, or other minoritized status.
- 7.3 Collect, analyze, and act upon disaggregated quantitative data that measure the impact of classroom factors, such as course design, course content, and instructional strategies, all disaggregated by race/ethnicity, income level, gender, age, or other minoritized status.
- 7.4 Collect, analyze, and act upon qualitative data that capture the experiences of students and faculty in English courses, corequisite courses, and other types of supports.
- 7.5 Explicitly identify, understand, and address factors that either contribute to or detract from the success of students from minoritized communities in college-level English courses.
- 7.6 Use data to inform a continuous improvement process to refine both the college-level course and corequisite supports and related practices, including placement and advising.
- 7.7 Use data to identify, understand, and address the needs of students who are less likely to be successful in the corequisite support courses and to develop additional support systems for those students. In addition to academic support, student needs may include mental health support, financial aid, or basic needs assistance.

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<sup>8</sup> The guided pathways model requires "creating more clearly structured, educationally coherent program pathways that lead to students' end goals" and includes "rethinking instruction and student support services in ways that facilitate students' learning and success as they progress along these paths" (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, p. 3). These pathways often include default gateway math and English courses to ensure that students take core courses aligned with their programs of study.

<sup>9</sup> The term *throughput rate* describes the percentage of a student cohort that completes the college-level gateway course within a given time period.



## Principle 8. Policy

States, systems, and institutions that successfully scale corequisite support:

- 8.1 Adopt placement/assessment policies that allow each student to enter directly into and succeed in a college-level English course.
- 8.2 Involve institutional leaders, faculty, and student services in the development and design of, and advocacy for, policies to support the implementation of the English corequisite program.
- 8.3 Design policies and provide resources to ensure that corequisite English courses are accessible to all students who are assessed as needing additional academic support, and address structural and systemic inequities present in English programs.
- 8.4 Adopt departmental curriculum policies, including assessment and grading policies, that foster both deep learning of the course content and high, equitable completion of college-level English.
- 8.5 Encourage their departments to prioritize assigning faculty with the necessary training and experience to college-level English and linked corequisite courses, and consider the possibility of allowing faculty in related disciplines, such as ESL and Reading, to teach these courses.
- 8.6 Adopt scheduling policies and practices that ensure sufficient access to corequisite support courses, offering classes in modalities, class sizes, and times that meet student needs.

## Principle 9. Professional Development and Support of Stakeholders

Institutions that successfully implement and scale corequisite English design professional development and other supports:

- 9.1 Create a culture of validating student capacity and of helping faculty and staff to examine unconscious biases and practices that negatively impact students. Professional development should also help faculty to expand their definitions of academic writing to be more inclusive of diverse communication styles.
- 9.2 Build the capacity of faculty to design, deliver, and continuously improve the college-level English course and corequisite course at their institutions with supports that meet their needs at different stages of the implementation process. These supports may include communities of practice, summer institutes, team teaching, and mentoring opportunities. Institutions should also seek professional development opportunities beyond their campuses, such as national conferences, state and regional events, and outside speakers.
- 9.3 Facilitate collaboration among diverse stakeholders including institutional researchers, administrators, and student support professionals. Sustain support and engagement of all institutional stakeholders responsible for the successful implementation of corequisite English in the professional development programs.
- 9.4 Result in the deployment of inclusive and anti-racist pedagogies and practices that maximize the success of students from minoritized communities.

- 9.5 Work with pre-existing support services on campus (e.g., writing center, reading lab) to co-create new models of supporting students in the college-level courses and corequisite courses.
- 9.6 Analyze disaggregated classroom and institutional data to understand the successes and experiences of students in corequisite classrooms, and focus professional development on adopting teaching practices and curriculum that validate and promote the successes of diverse student populations.

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## About the Dana Center

The Charles A. Dana Center develops and scales mathematics and science education innovations to support educators, administrators, and policy makers in creating seamless transitions throughout the K–16 system for all students, especially those who have historically been underserved. We focus in particular on strategies for improving student engagement, motivation, persistence, and achievement.

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