

Research Report

Sacramento City College

**Office of Planning, Research, and
Institutional Effectiveness (PRIE)**

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PREREQUISITE VALIDATION STUDY COMM: 2012

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Introduction:

Title 5 Section 55201 requires the examination of all prerequisites at least once every six years to assure that the prerequisites remain necessary and appropriate”¹ Title 5 was revised in 2012 to streamline the process for implementing *new* prerequisites; however, the process for reviewing and validating existing prerequisites remains essentially unchanged.

At SCC, for prerequisites in which an English or Math course is pre- or co- requisite to a course from another discipline this review includes a survey of both faculty and students which addresses student readiness for the subsequent course based on the skills obtained in the prerequisite course. It is expected that at least 75% of both faculty and students should agree that the prerequisite has adequately prepared students and is necessary for successful completion of the course for a prerequisite to meet validation standards.

The student perception survey used in a *consequential validity* study (see Appendix A), includes four-questions designed to determine how a student met the course prerequisite, to assess students’ perception of their preparedness for the course, the level of course difficulty, and their perception of the importance of prerequisite skills for success in the current course. The three-question faculty perception survey (see Appendix B) asks faculty to indicate what percentage of their students are adequately prepared for the course, whether they feel the prerequisite is necessary for successful completion of the course, and how important they feel the prerequisite *skills* are for success in the current course. These questions address both the necessity and the sufficiency of the prerequisite. Validation of the necessity of the prerequisite is required in order to have the prerequisite in place. Additional information on the sufficiency of the prerequisite may inform decisions regarding additional prerequisites, support for student learning, or other practices.

Results for Communication Courses Fall 2012

COMM 301, 311, 315, 321, 331, 361 Prerequisite Validations

During the Fall 2012 semester, student and faculty surveys were sent to all sections of all COMM courses. A number of sections did not return survey materials. Table 1 summarizes courses, sections, and numbers of student surveys returned by course.

Table 1

COURSE	SECTIONS RECEIVED		Total Sections	Student Surveys Received
	NO	YES		
COMM 301	6	17	23	372
COMM 305	1	0	1	0
COMM 311	0	3	3	49
COMM 315	1	0	1	0
COMM 321	0	5	5	102
COMM 325	2	1	3	24
COMM 331	2	6	8	159
COMM 335	3	0	3	0
COMM 361	0	3	3	71
TOTAL	18	32	50	721

¹ Chancellor’s Office, California Community Colleges Student Services and Special Programs Division. (Fall 1997). *Prerequisites, Corequisites, Advisories, and Limitations on Enrollment*.

Results Summary

Table 2 shows the summary of results by course for the student and faculty surveys. We compare Column 2 of the table with the last column, looking for an indication that at least 75% of students who were adequately prepared for the work they encountered in the COMM course. The expected standard for prerequisite validation, based on student and faculty surveys, was met in COMM 301, 321, and 361. In all courses for which there are data, the student responses met the criteria, but for COMM 311 and 331, the faculty response did not. Additionally, a lack of student and faculty responses for COMM 325 makes it difficult to draw conclusions about that course.

Table 2

COURSE	Student Responses (%)			Faculty Responses (%)		
	Prepared: <i>Adequately or Over Prepared</i>	Level of Work: <i>Just right or too easy</i>	Prerequisite Skills: <i>Necessary or important</i>	Prerequisite Necessary: <i>Agree or Strongly Agree</i>	Prerequisite Skills: <i>Essential or Important</i>	Adequately Prepared Students
COMM-301	96.8	93.3	62.4	77.8	66.7	90.0
COMM-311	91.8	83.7	70.8	100.0*	100.0*	—
COMM-321	95.1	87.3	65.7	60.0	60.0	81.7
COMM-325	91.7	95.8	58.3	—	—	100.0*
COMM-331	98.1	94.3	56.6	100.0	100.0	54.0
COMM-361	98.6	95.8	64.8	—	—	93.3

* Only one instructor responded.

— no instructor responses received.

Detailed results for each course

Communication-301: Introduction to Public Speaking

Prerequisite: ENGWR 101 (*College Writing*) or ESLW 320 (*Advanced-Low Writing*) with a grade of "C" or better; or placement through the assessment process.

Student surveys: 372 students from 17 sections of Communication-301 completed the student survey. The majority (59.6%) of students indicated that they met the prerequisite for the course by taking the previous course at SCC or another institution, 36.6% met the prerequisite through the assessment process, while 3.8% met the prerequisite through counselor verification or the challenge process. When asked to assess their level of preparedness for the course, 96.8% of the students felt they were adequately or over- prepared for the work in the course. Furthermore, 93.3% of the students described the level of work in the course as “just right,” and 62.4% of the students feel that the prerequisite skills are necessary or important for their success in the course.

Faculty surveys. Ten of 13 instructors who completed the survey (76.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that a prerequisite is necessary for successful completion of Communication-301. Furthermore, nine of 13 (69.2%) think that the prerequisite skills are essential or important for student success in the course. On average, faculty felt 90% of the students were adequately prepared for the work in the course.

Final Grades. The success rate for students who completed surveys was 86.8% for Fall 2012, while the overall success rate for COMM 301 was 72.6%. Note that the overall success rate includes in the denominator students who received a “W” grade, while only a few students in the survey data received “W” grades.

Summary. The results from the student and faculty surveys meet the criteria in the SCC guidelines, and course success rates are relatively high. The findings suggest that the prerequisite may be both necessary and sufficient preparation to ensure a high likelihood of student success.

Communication-311: Argumentation and Debate

Prerequisite: ENGWR 101 (*College Writing*) or ESLW 320 (*Advanced-Low Writing*) with a grade of "C" or better; or placement through the assessment process.

Student surveys: 49 students from three sections of Communication-311 completed the student survey. The majority (51.0%) of students indicated that they met the prerequisite for the course through the assessment process and 46.9% met the prerequisite by taking the previous course at SCC or another institution, while the remaining 2% used counselor verification to meet the prerequisite. When asked to assess their level of preparedness for the course, 91.8% of the students felt they were adequately or over-prepared for the work in the course, and 83.7% of students described the level of coursework as "too easy" or "just right."

Faculty surveys. One of three faculty members completed any portion of the faculty survey. Although the faculty member who completed the survey strongly agreed that a prerequisite is necessary and that the prerequisite skills are essential for successful completion of Communication-311, the instructor did not estimate the percentage of adequately prepared students.

Final Grades. For student surveys matched to final grades, the student success rate was 91.3%, while the overall success rate was 72.5%. Note that the overall success rate includes in the denominator students who received a "W" grade, while only a few students in the survey data received "W" grades.

Summary. The student survey meets the criteria in the SCC guidelines; however, the lack of any faculty estimate of the percentage of adequately prepared students does not meet the criteria because there is no data to analyze. The final grade data, which reflect a course success rate above the college average, suggest that the prerequisite may be necessary and sufficient preparation for student success.

Communication-321: Interpersonal Communication

Prerequisite: ENGWR 51 (*Developmental Writing*) or ESLW 310 (*Intermediate-High Writing*) with a grade of "C" or better; or placement through the assessment process.

Student surveys: 102 students from five sections of Communication-321 completed the student survey. Most of the students indicated that they met the prerequisite through the assessment process (48.0%), and 45.0% met the prerequisite for the course by taking the previous course at SCC or another institution, while the remaining 7.0% met the prerequisite requirement through counselor verification or the challenge process. When asked to assess their level of preparedness for the course, 95.1% of the students indicated that they were adequately or over-prepared for the level of work in the class. Furthermore, 83.3% described the level of work as "just right," and 65.7% feel that the prerequisite skills are necessary or important for their success in the course.

Faculty surveys. Three of five faculty responses (60%) agreed or strongly agreed that a prerequisite is necessary for successful completion of Communication-321. The other 40% strongly disagreed. Only two instructors estimated the percentage of adequately prepared students—at 80% for each section.

Final Grades. For student surveys matched to final grades, the student success rate was 91.0%, while the overall success rate was 67.7%. Note that the overall success rate includes in the denominator students who received a "W" grade, while only a few students in the survey data received "W" grades.

Summary. The student survey meets the criteria in the SCC guidelines; however, the faculty survey does not meet the criteria. Based on the faculty's mixed perception of a need for the prerequisite and the course's percentage of adequately prepared students, the department may want to reassess the need for a prerequisite for COMM 321. However, the Fall 2012 success rate for COMM 321 is not unusually high (67.7%), so it may be that the prerequisite is necessary but not sufficient to ensure the likelihood of success in the course.

Communication-325: Intercultural Communication

Prerequisite: ENGWR 101 (*College Writing*) or ESLW 320 (*Advanced-Low Writing*) with a grade of "C" or better; or placement through the assessment process.

Student surveys: 24 students from one section of Communication-325 completed the student survey. Most of the students indicated that they met the prerequisite for the course through the assessment process (62.5%), while 29.2% took the previous course at SCC or another institution and 8.3% used counselor verification to meet the prerequisite. When asked to assess their level of preparedness, 91.7% of the students indicated that they were adequately or over-prepared for the level of work in the class. Furthermore, 95.8% described the level of work as "just right," while 58.3% of the students feel that the prerequisite skills are necessary or important for their success in the course.

Faculty surveys. Only one instructor completed the faculty survey, and only answered the item that estimates percentage of adequately prepared students.

Final Grades. For student surveys matched to final grades, the student success rate was 71.9%, and the overall success rate was also 71.9%. Note that the overall success rate includes in the denominator students who received a "W" grade, while only a few students in the survey data received "W" grades.

Summary. The student survey meets the criteria in the SCC guidelines; however, a sample of 24 students is not generalizable to students who enroll in COMM 325. Furthermore, the faculty survey does not fully meet the criteria.

Communication-331: Group Discussion

Prerequisite: ENGWR 101 (*College Writing*) or ESLW 320 (*Advanced-Low Writing*) with a grade of "C" or better; or placement through the assessment process.

Student surveys. 159 students from six sections of Communication-331 completed the student survey. Most of the students indicated that they met the prerequisite for the course by taking the previous course at SCC or another institution (57.2%), an additional 35.8% of the students met the prerequisite through the assessment process, while 6.9% of the students met the prerequisite requirement through counselor verification or the challenge process. When asked to assess their level of preparedness, 98.1% of the students indicated that they were adequately or over-prepared for the level of work in the class. Furthermore, 93.6% described the level of work as "just right," and 56.6% of the students felt that the prerequisite skills are necessary or important for their success in the course.

Faculty surveys. All of the faculty ($n = 5$) who completed the survey agreed or strongly agreed that a prerequisite is necessary for successful completion of Communication-331. On average, faculty indicated that 54% of the students were adequately prepared for the work in the course.

Final Grades. For student surveys matched to final grades, the student success rate was 77.6%, while the overall success rate was 78.1%. Note that the overall success rate includes in the denominator students who received a "W" grade, while only a few students in the survey data received "W" grades.

Summary. The results from the student survey meets the criteria, and faculty surveys partially meet the criteria in the SCC guidelines. The high course success rates could be attributable to strong student preparation in the prerequisite skills, however, COMM 331 assignments could be more closely aligned with other skills.

Communication-361: The Communication Experience

Prerequisite: ENGWR 100 (*College Writing*) or ESLW 320 (*Advanced-Low Writing*) with a grade of "C" or better; or placement through the assessment process.

Student surveys. 71 students from three sections of Communication-361 completed the student survey. Most of the students indicated that they met the prerequisite for the course by taking the previous course at SCC or another institution (60.6%), an additional 35.2% of the students met the prerequisite through the assessment process, while the remaining 4.2% of the students met the prerequisite requirement through counselor verification. When asked to assess their level of preparedness, 98.6% of the students indicated that they were adequately or over-prepared for the level of work in the class. Furthermore, 90.1% of the students described the level of work in the course as "just right." Most of the students (64.8%) thought the prerequisite skills are "necessary" or "important" to their success in the course.

Faculty surveys. When asked to indicate if the prerequisite is necessary for successful completion of Communication-361, none of the three faculty members who returned materials answered. However, all three of the faculty members estimated the percentage of adequately prepared students, which is 93.3% on average.

Final Grades. For student surveys matched to final grades, the student success rate was 79.5%, and the overall success rate was also 79.5%. Note that the overall success rate includes in the denominator students who received a "W" grade, while only a few students in the survey data received "W" grades.

Summary. The student and faculty surveys minimally meet the criteria in the SCC guidelines.