

**MIT Task Force on the Undergraduate Educational Commons
Student Advisory Committee**

Preliminary Report Addendum

I. The HASS and Communication Requirements

Though feelings about the HASS requirement were mixed, students generally agreed that the current framework for HASS-Ds needs to be improved. The system of requiring both HASS-D and CI-H subjects is indeed complicated and limits choice, as our report stated. Moreover, additional HASS-D categories may be appropriate. Nevertheless, there are several concerns that the SAC needs to address as it moves forward in making additional recommendations.

The primary source of confusion in the report on the HASS requirement is its unclear articulation of a “rigorous” standard. There are several points in the report that discuss the benefits of a more rigorous HASS program, but there is little suggestion of what this rigor would entail.

Because rigor was undefined, many students read the report as saying that the primary focus of any rigorous HASS class will be on written and oral communication. While high standards of these types of communication are important, we need to assess whether there is a place for “increased levels” of them. In addition, we need to contextualize economics, linguistics, and the arts into the report. Many of these classes have no place in HASS based upon the current language of our report; this deeply concerned a number of students who saw such classes (especially classes in the arts) as essential to the HASS program.

In sum, most students felt that our report could be equated to a universal CI-H requirement. However, this was not our intent. Rather, we intended to allow students to have more of a universal HASS-D option (across all departments and classes), and swallow up the CI-H designation in the process. It may be better to eliminate our jargon about a certain level of “rigor” in subsequent reports and instead recommend a more general selection of HASS-Ds. Since some students were concerned about the level of writing instruction received by students prior to arriving at the institute, it may be useful to capture the current goals of the CI-H through a freshman experience (not necessarily 18 units) that emphasizes basic humanistic communication. We need to articulate the intent of a freshman experience more clearly in subsequent writings (i.e. capturing of basic skills and giving people common ground to stand on in the freshman year).

Another issue students brought up with the Communication Requirement is the fact that it discourages students from taking certain classes. Students stressed that classes like 21F.010 allow their students the option to take the class for CI credit. The student declines CI credit by not electing to revise papers in that class. The SAC would consider supporting the retention of the Communication Requirement if students had the option to take classes currently designated CI in a non-CI form.

Three other issues arose that should be considered. The first is HASS prerequisites - some students suggested implementing strict prerequisite chains (up to defining “levels” of classes). Second, it may be useful to address scheduling. As of now, many students are precluded from taking HASS classes simply because they are scheduled in conflict with those in science and engineering. Third, the suggestion was made that the HASS concentration be made optional. A student who wants to obtain the

title of a concentrator in a certain area could pursue that desire, whereas a student who prefers a more topical coverage in many areas could take a variety of classes but would not be able to claim any concentration.

Some students commented on our recommendations regarding the FEE; we also spoke with Les Perelman about the FEE. From our discussions, it is clear that the FEE may still have a place as a tool that determines placement into courses. The FEE requires multiple writing samples and has relatively uniform grading standards. Nevertheless, the FEE still needs to have more flexibility in test offerings and could potentially offer more prompts per administration. We would like to reaffirm our suggestion that the AP Language/Literature and Composition tests not function as substitutes for the FEE.

In general, people are supportive of CI-Ms but suggest a more lenient petition process for them as well as the option to take a CI-M class without having to do the extra work required of a CI (and thus not receive CI-M credit). Some of the most interesting classes are currently designated CI-M which has discouraged students from taking those classes because CI-M courses create additional burdens in the context of an already rigorous schedule.

II. The Science GIRs

Student response to the SAC's proposed science GIR program varied. Many students appreciated our attempt to allow more flexibility in choosing the courses to fulfill the requirement by having a "basket" of options. However, most negative comments focused on the fact that we proposed that each student must take at least six science GIRs regardless of past AP or advanced standing tests. Many students felt this to

be punishment for excelling and did not believe that someone who had learned the required material in an area should be forced to take more subjects in that area.

The SAC considered this point and found it to be valid in some cases. The reasoning behind the SAC's "minimum of six science GIRs" proposal in the preliminary report was to ensure that students did not pass out of science GIR subjects without knowing those subjects to the degree expected of MIT graduates. Upon further discussion, the SAC decided that it was primarily concerned with the effectiveness of AP tests in judging students' levels of understanding, and that MIT-administered advanced standing exams appropriately gauge students' levels of understanding. Thus, the SAC proposes the following change to its original science GIR framework:

- ◆ A student who receives AP credit for a science GIR subject will be given placement into a higher-level course in the AP subject's discipline; for example, a student who receives AP credit for biology will be able to take any biology class that has 7.012/013/014 as a prerequisite, such as 7.03, in order to complete the biology GIR. The student may also opt to take the class at MIT for which they received AP test placement in order to fulfill that subject requirement.
- ◆ A student who passes an advanced standing exam for a science GIR subject will be given full credit for that subject.

Some students have also pointed out that changing the science GIR structure could potentially add coursework to students' academic loads because some majors require both 18.02 and 8.02 as prerequisites, while our proposal does not make students take both of these subjects. However, analysis of the course loads (see attached spreadsheet) shows that only Course 2, Course 5, Course 8, and Course 12 majors would

be required to take one more class because those are the only majors that require both 8.02 and 18.02 and do not currently require a computation subject. Students in these majors only comprise about 16% of all undergraduates¹. Seven majors (1C, 3, 11, 15, 17, 21, and 24) would in fact have fewer requirements and/or more choices in their fulfillment of the science GIRs under the SAC's plan than they do today. Other majors would be unaffected, though for two (4 and 16) the course requirements depend on a student's concentration within the major.

¹ According to the 2004-05 "Y Report" distributed by the Registrar's Office.

Comparison of SAC Proposed Science Core to Today's Core by Major Program

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1C	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	1.00
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	5.11X	7.01X	1.00	
1E	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	5.11X	7.01X	Comp	
2	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	Comp
3	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	3.091	7.01X	3.021J(Comp)
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	3.091	7.01X	Comp	
4	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	8.02 or 18.02	Comp	
5	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	Comp
6	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	6.001
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	6.001
7	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	5.11X	7.01X	Comp	
8	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	Comp
9	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	5.11X	9.01	Comp	
10	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	5.11X	7.01X	Comp	
11	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	8.01	5.11X	7.01X	Comp	GIR 6	
12	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	Comp
14	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	5.11X	7.01X	Comp	
15	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	6.001/1.00
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	5.11X	7.01X	6.001.1.00	
16	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	16.901 (16-1 only)
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	16.901
17	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	8.01	5.11X	7.01X	Comp	GIR 6	
18	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	5.11X	7.01X	Comp	
21	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	8.01	5.11X	7.01X	Comp	GIR 6	
22	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	12.010(Comp)
	SAC	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	Comp
24	Today	18.01	18.02	8.01	8.02	5.11X	7.01X	
	SAC	18.01	8.01	5.11X	7.01X	Comp	GIR 6	

- Fewer requirement and/or more choice than today
- Depends on major concentration
- More requirements than today
- No change