

# memo

To: Senate

From: Todd Milford, A/Dean, Education and Cindy Holder, Professor, Philosophy, Co-chairs, AWR Working Group

CC: Elizabeth Adjin-Tetty, AVP Academic Programs, VPAC

Date: February 6, 2026

Re: **For information: Core Writing & Research Requirement proposal**

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The purpose of this memo is to provide Senate with an overview of the proposed Core Writing & Research Requirement and to invite feedback on the key recommendations arising from the 2024/25 review of the Academic Writing Requirement (AWR). Specifically, Senate is invited to provide feedback on the proposal to eliminate the current AWR and replace it with a mandatory, university-wide Core Writing & Research Requirement.

The proposal is not being brought forward for approval at this time. Feedback received from Senate will inform refinement of the proposal prior to seeking formal Senate approval. A detailed proposal outlining the rationale, structure, consultation findings, and proposed implementation considerations is attached for reference.

## Background

The AWR has been UVic's principal approach to ensuring foundational academic writing skills for several decades (first introduced in the 1970s as the Undergraduate English Requirement and changed to the [Academic Writing Requirement](#) in 2012). A university-wide review conducted in 2024/25 by the AWR Working Group identified several systemic challenges that limit the requirement's effectiveness, including:

- A significant and growing proportion of students satisfying the AWR on admission through high school English grades, compounded by the elimination of the English 12 provincial exam.
- A disconnect between the increasing rates of AWR satisfaction on admission and ongoing concerns about student readiness for university-level work, leading to program-level remediation strategies that further strain AWR-designated course capacity.
- Persistent bottlenecks and capacity issues in AWR-designated courses, particularly in large programs requiring a specific AWR-designated course for progression.

- Misalignment between the AWR's intended purpose as an early foundational requirement and actual completion patterns, with approximately 32% of eligible students completing the requirement after first year.
- The absence of shared university-level learning outcomes, university-level oversight, or mechanisms to assess institutional effectiveness in foundational skills instruction.

Collectively, these issues have implications for academic standards, student progression, and advising clarity, among others.

### Overview of the proposed requirement

The Core Writing & Research Requirement is intended to establish a shared institutional baseline for foundational academic skills early in students' undergraduate studies. Key elements include:

- Six high-level Core Competencies (described in Appendix E of the attached proposal) that articulate university-level expectations for foundational academic skills, rather than prescriptive course-level learning outcomes
- Recognition of all current AWR-designated courses as satisfying the Core Requirement, reflecting their existing alignment with the proposed competencies
- Mandatory completion for all incoming undergraduate students expected in year 1, except where appropriate transfer credit applies
- A proposed institutional launch in May 2028, informed by preliminary consultation with the Office of the Registrar and Enrolment Management (OREM)

The proposal also recommends the establishment of a university-level governance mechanism to support quality assurance, consistency, and ongoing review. While governance and implementation are beyond the scope of Senate approval, they have been key areas of consultation and are addressed at a high level in the attached proposal.

### Scope and consultations

Key themes from consultations included strong support for a mandatory first-year foundational academic skills requirement, broad endorsement of a competency-based, institution-wide model, and recognition of the need for improved coordination and governance.

In consultation with the Office Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement (IACE), it was determined that the inclusion of Indigenous-specific curricular requirements or learning outcomes is out of scope for the proposed new requirement.

### Recommendations requiring Senate feedback

The Working Group seeks Senate's feedback on the following recommendations:

1. That the AWR be discontinued and replaced with a Core Writing & Research Requirement grounded in six university-level Core Competencies
2. That the Core Writing & Research Requirement be mandatory for all undergraduate students and satisfied exclusively through approved Core-designated coursework or

appropriate transfer credit, with high school grades not eligible to satisfy the requirement

### Planned further action

Feedback from Senate will inform refinement of the proposal, which is anticipated to be submitted to Senate for approval in April 2026.

### Attachments

- Core Writing & Research Requirement Proposal (draft)