

November 8, 2022

Dear Faculty Senate Executive Committee,

We are writing to request a review of the recent changes made to the requirements for the Historical Consciousness (H) subscript before they go into effect. As we detail in this letter, the recent revisions to the H-subscript represent substantial changes for students seeking to meet their degree requirements. We, as faculty representing programs which will be affected by the changes, are voicing our concerns and requesting a reconsideration of the rigorous new standards in this application.

Overview of Changes to the H-subscript

These new standards represent a substantive and significant change from the previous standards represented in the H-subscript application. The previous application explained that H-subscript courses should “introduce to students the significance of historical times as an essential dimension of the events, behaviors, and ideas within and across societies’ cultures” and “create an awareness of how events, behaviors or ideas exist within the context of time and space, and how they help one understand continuities and discontinuities, permanence and change in societies and cultures.” In contrast, the new application asks for each H-subscript course to “develop students’ awareness and skills in at least three of the following areas”: building historical knowledge, thinking historically, developing historical methods and arguments, using history as a citizen, or countering racism. Applicants for the H-subscript must describe how their course addresses at least three of these categories.

The new application for H-subscript courses require courses to “focus on history as the core content (minimum 50%) exposing students to a range of sources over time and across geographical regions, societies, and cultures that reveal historical origins, changes, continuities, discontinuities, and causation.” This sets out a high threshold for the amount of class time devoted to historical content. Additionally, the expectation that courses integrate “a range of sources over time and across geographical regions, societies, cultures” is unlikely to translate well into all courses seeking an H-subscript.

According to the new requirements, “H-subscript courses **teach students research skills**. Students learn to ask open-ended questions and to devise research strategies to answer them. They learn how to locate relevant primary and secondary sources, how to evaluate evidence and arguments, how to use evidence to generate compelling arguments of their own, how to articulate their conclusions, how to cite their sources, and how to explain the significance of their work.” As written now, it appears that teaching this range of research skills is a requirement of any H-

subscript course. While this list articulates important skills that we work to help our students attain across our courses, it is likely that not all courses seeking an H-subscript, particularly introductory level courses, will focus on helping students cultivate this broad set of research skills. Further, the application requires use of Chicago citation format, while our programs have already adapted other formats for all program courses.

These substantive changes to the application criteria require H-subscript courses to extensively cover history content, specifically address multiple historical skills *and* integrate research skills. Requiring courses to provide at least 50% history content in the course and teach multiple historical and research skills effectively means only courses offered in Historical Studies would be approved to carry the H-subscript.

Comparison with Other Subscripts

The H-subscript as it stands now reflects a very different standard of review than the three other subscripts (Arts (A), International/Multicultural (I), and Values (V)). In fact, previously the H-attribute application closely resembled the applications for the I, A and V subscripts—now, it is clearly very different from the application standards for the other subscripts. We strongly believe that there should be a cohesiveness across all subscript applications. While the content each subscript requires obviously will be distinct, the standards for applying for each subscript should be relatively consistent. Further, the H attribute is the only one that has an expiration date.

Perhaps most importantly, these changes represent a fundamental departure from what subscripts themselves are intended to provide for students. These subscripts are about introducing students to Arts, Multicultural/International, Values, and Historical Consciousness *within different disciplinary contexts*. Indeed, the opportunities to explore each of these concepts in different academic contexts is core to General Studies and to liberal arts education. As we are concerned that most courses outside of History will fail to meet these high standards in this application, students will no longer have the opportunity to develop historical consciousness in different disciplines.

Impact of Changes on Students

Most concretely, we are worried that many courses that have previously been offered with the H attribute (including several of our own courses) will fail to meet these new H-subscript requirements. We are concerned primarily with the impact that the changes to the H-subscript will have on the availability of these courses for Stockton students. The standards now required will certainly mean a decrease in the number of courses with a H-subscript, making it more difficult for students to meet this graduation requirement. The implications of these changes have already been evident—when the new standards went into effect initially during summer 2022,

there were far fewer H-courses offered for fall semester 2022 compared to previous semesters and compared to V-, A-, and I-courses. It is clear that moving ahead (again) with this change without further consideration and opportunity for affected faculty to weigh in and argue for changes will have immediate negative effects for our students. For transfer students with limited time to complete the range of subscripts and requirements, this could well mean that they need extra time and tuition to complete their degrees. This could impact Stockton's retention and on-time graduation outcomes.

Such a dramatic change in the requirements, and the potential that so few courses will meet these requirements, necessitates a broader conversation about these changes that will affect every program and student at Stockton.

Recommendations

We recommend that in the immediate future, the Senate Executive Committee review and compare the previous and new H-subscript applications to determine if these changes require Faculty Senate approval before they are implemented because of its impact. There will be an immediate and significant decrease in the number of H courses available for students if this application and new requirements go into effect. If the Senate Executive Committee agrees that the significant changes to the H-subscript application need Faculty Senate approval, we suggest that the Committee on Academic Policies work with the H-subscript convenor to review the application before these changes are formally put to a Faculty Senate vote.

Our second recommendation is that the Faculty Senate Committee on Academic Policies work in cooperation with the H, A, I, and V subscript convenors to outline clear policies for how changes to subscript applications proceed in the future. We do not object to subscript convenors being able to update their standards or their application processes—in fact, such work to update subscript standards is valuable and important. But these subscripts are required for all our students and, as a result, any changes to them should be subject to a clear and transparent review process as well as debate and a vote within the Faculty Senate, as when new programs, minors or concentrations are proposed.

Finally, we recommend that a reconsideration of all four General Studies attributes be added to the work of the ongoing task force on learning outcomes, or that it be taken on as a new task force to ensure that students -- especially transfers -- are able to meet the increasing number of university-wide and General Studies requirements without delaying graduation. We have only added new requirements, without doing enough to ensure there are enough courses for students to meet those requirements, or evaluating whether they are all still relevant.

Sincerely,

Political Science Faculty
Social Work Faculty

CC: Dean Marissa Levy, Dean Robb Gregg, Professor Laura Zucconi

Attached:

Prior H-subscript application

Current H-subscript application

Applications for A-, I- and V-subscripts