



## Commission on English Language Program Accreditation Commission Action Report

**Program or institution:** Weber State University  
Learning English for Academic Purposes (LEAP) Department

**Date of action:** December 2017

**Action taken:** Granted **1-year reaccreditation** with **eleven** reporting requirements and one recommendation and a **special site visit**

**Accredited through:** December 2018

The Commission has found the program or institution not to be in compliance with the individual *CEA Standards* noted below. Non-compliance means that the program or institution is lacking one or more requirements of the standard. The program or institution must respond to the reporting requirement(s) by the date specified below. The Commission has issued one recommendation with this report. Note that responding to a recommendation is optional.

With these reporting requirements, the Commission has issued a special site visit to verify the contents of the 1-year Report. Please see the accompanying letter for more details about the special site visit.

After reviewing the report and within 30 days, submit a notice to Mary Reeves, CEA's Executive Director at [mhreeves@cea-accredit.org](mailto:mhreeves@cea-accredit.org) stating your intent to comply by the response submission due date(s).

### Requirements for Reporting:

**Curriculum Standard 1: The curriculum is consistent with the mission of the program or language institution, appropriate to achieve the organization's goals and meet assessed student needs, and available in writing.**

The program's curriculum, in alignment with its mission, prepares students with the language and cultural understanding necessary for academic success. The curriculum includes course goals, course objectives, and statements of student learning outcomes. It is documented in a curriculum handbook. There are seven levels in the program and they include instruction in writing, reading, listening and speaking, grammar, and either pronunciation (levels one through four) or community service (levels five and six). The seventh level involves advanced reading and writing classes which can be taken in conjunction with university classes. Levels 1 through 3 are non-credit and Levels 4 through 7 are credit-bearing. All students are fully matriculated university students.

No evidence was provided showing that the program had assessed student needs and then developed its mission and curriculum in light of those assessed needs.

In its response to the review team report, the program discussed several areas of its curricular practices, including placement testing and how it identified the language needs of individual enrollees, changes in student demographics which led to the introduction of two additional levels of instruction, the role of assessment development as it relates to student performance indicators, and how student understanding of American university and social culture is developed. The fact that the program has aligned the exit criteria for its Bridge classes with the university's English department composition course projected requirements was also mentioned, but not documented. While the site's response did provide some examples of curricular changes to align with student demographics, the response did not provide evidence of analysis of student needs or indicate how assessed student needs inform curriculum design as regular process.

#### **Reporting Requirement 1**

By October 1, 2018, document how the needs of the student population(s) sought, enrolled, and graduated from the program are assessed and established. (Curriculum 1)

**Curriculum Standard 2: Course goals, course objectives, and student learning outcomes are written, appropriate for the curriculum, and aligned with each other. The student learning outcomes within the curriculum represent significant progress or accomplishment.**

The program's course information is published in a curriculum handbook and a curriculum map overview shows vertically sequencing between levels and the lateral interconnection within each level. Information for each course at each level includes, among other things, the catalog description, a course goal, one or more course objectives, and student learning outcomes for some courses.

There are several concerns related to SLOs. First, they are not written in measurable and observable terms. Rather, they are checklists of tasks or pedagogy to be applied in the class. Second, SLOs are omitted from some courses, e.g. level 5 and 6 community based learning. Third, SLOs are not expressed in terms of academic readiness and do not represent significant proficiency gains from level to level. Fourth, when the SLOs in the curriculum handbook and those on the syllabi in use during the visit were compared, they did not match.

The Review Team Report included SLO examples which illustrated the concerns listed above: SLOs are missing from the levels 5 and 6 community-based learning courses; two level 6 grammar course SLOs are "Understand conditionals that omit 'if'" and "Understand mixed time conditionals"; a level 3 listening and speaking course SLO is "At the end of the course students can show mastery of the following items with accuracy of 77% or better: community, transport, workplace, areas of study, plant, animals, and recreation"; and a level 6 writing course SLO is "An ability to work with a tutor to edit their work and with their teacher to revise any content and organizational problems they have with their essays."

In its response to the review team report, the program included a copy of its current curriculum handbook as well as a complete set of its current syllabi. In these documents, each course includes SLOs and, for all courses, SLOs are consistent between what is in the handbook and what is on syllabi. The site also explained that, for level 6, the ability to work with a tutor should actually be an objective rather than an SLO. The curriculum handbook and the course syllabi show that this error has been corrected.

The site stated that course SLO sections all begin with the statement “At the end of the course students can show mastery of the following items with accuracy of 77% or better.” An examination the curriculum handbook and syllabi show that this is consistently the case. In many instances, the statement is followed by items beginning with, for example, use; create; write; identify; ask; describe, etc. In tandem with the opening statement, these items constitute statements of what students can do. As such, the statements are measurable and observable. Further examination of the handbook and syllabi provided in the response, however, does reveal a limited number of items for which this is still not the case. In addition to the two conditional examples from the review team report, these include, for example, “Communicate about general life topics and basic needs”, “An understanding of word syllables” and “Serve a community member in need.” The site did not address the concern regarding SLOs not representing significant proficiency gains from level to level.

#### **Reporting Requirement 2**

By October 1, 2018, provide evidence that all student learning outcomes are observable and measurable and that they represent significant proficiency gains from level to level. (Curriculum 2)

#### **Faculty Standard 1: Faculty members have education and training commensurate with their teaching assignments.**

At the time of the visit, the program employed three full-time faculty and one adjunct. Each of the full-time faculty had a master’s degree in TESOL or in a closely related field with a TESOL certificate. The adjunct faculty member was teaching level 6 and her credentials were an MEd in K-12 curriculum and instruction, an MEd in administration, and an expired ESL endorsement for grades one through eight. No evidence was provided to show that she had the knowledge base and skill set required by the standard.

In its response to the review team report, the program discussed the adjunct instructor’s efforts to investigate the status of her ESL grades 1-8 endorsement as well as her plans to take courses to meet the CEA education and training requirements. No documentation was included in the response.

#### **Reporting Requirement 3**

By October 1, 2018, provide evidence to demonstrate that instructors who teach academic preparation courses have acquired the knowledge base and skill set as presented in the discussion section of the standard, or that a plan is in place for the faculty member(s) to acquire the components of the knowledge base and skill set. (Faculty 1)

#### **Faculty Standard 7: The program or language institution describes to faculty clearly and in writing the performance criteria and procedures for evaluation at the onset of the evaluation period; conducts faculty performance evaluations that are systematic, regular, fair, objective, and relevant to achieving program or institutional goals; and conveys evaluation results to faculty in writing in a timely manner.**

The program has a faculty evaluation procedure which is described in its LEAP department handbook. Students complete end of course evaluations of faculty and some evidence was found in faculty files of peer observations and self-evaluations. These activities are not, though, carried out on a regular basis.

Both the irregularity of documentation on site and interviews conducted by the review team confirmed that the program does not perform faculty evaluations that are systematic, regular, based on multiple forms of data, and documented.

In its response to the review team report, the program provided a copy of its LEAP department handbook. In the section on faculty performance evaluation, the handbook stated that evaluation for full-time faculty will occur every three years. The evaluation will include student evaluations, classroom observations, the teacher self-evaluation form, a teaching portfolio, and a consultation with the chair.

Additional documentation included with the response were several observation and team teaching forms. Dates on forms ranged from 2013-2015 and one was from 2016. The site stated and provided evidence that two instances of observation occurred outside the regular evaluation process. In one case, the observation had been triggered by an unruly student and the other took place when an applicant for an adjunct position wanted to see a class.

The response concluded with the statement that, because of downsizing and rescheduling, time for faculty evaluation had been limited. The program has recommitted to implementing the process that is in place, and states that faculty evaluation will occur in the second block of the current semester.

#### **Reporting Requirement 4**

By October 1, 2018, provide evidence that the program carries out faculty evaluations that are systematic, regular, based on multiple forms of data, and documented. Provide sample redacted performance evaluations as evidence the process has been carried out. (Faculty 7)

#### **Administrative and Fiscal Capacity Standard 4: The program or language institution defines, encourages, and supports appropriate professional development activities for faculty, administrators, and staff.**

Both the university and the program encourage and support professional development and LEAP administration, staff, and faculty participate in development. On-campus activities are provided by both the university and the program. Grants are available to administrators and staff and a development stipend can be used by faculty to, for example, attend conferences. Participation in professional development is documented.

The program does not, however, have a written statement(s) of its policies, expectations, or standards for the professional development of faculty, administrators, or staff.

In its response to the review team report, the program cited language that now appears in the LEAP department faculty handbook. This language explains that the chair oversees professional development and that all university employees are expected to improve performance and capability. It goes on to say that faculty should use conference travel money to achieve the greatest impact for students, for

themselves, and for the department, and that they should share with peers what has been learned upon their return. Expected benefits should be discussed with the chair prior to making a request for travel money. The handbook does not include such things as how much professional development faculty should carry out over what period of time, what activities other than conference attendance constitute professional development, or if/how development should be documented.

The site response focused on faculty professional development and did not reference professional development for administrators or staff.

#### **Reporting Requirement 5**

By October 1, 2018, provide evidence that the program defines in writing its standards and requirements for the professional development of administrators, faculty, and staff.  
(Administrative and Fiscal Capacity 4)

**Administrative and Fiscal Capacity Standard 5: The program or language institution describes to administrators and staff clearly and in writing the performance criteria and procedures for evaluation at the onset of the evaluation period; conducts administrator and staff performance evaluations that are systematic, regular, fair, objective, and relevant to achieving program goals; and conveys evaluation results to administrators and staff in writing in a timely manner.**

The university has formal, written policy for the evaluation of administrators and staff and the evaluation described appears to be systematic, regular and relevant to achieving program goals. In the case of the administrative assistant, evaluation addresses skills, effort, responsibility and working conditions. Input comes from the chair, faculty who choose to provide it, and the administrative assistant. Once evaluation results have been provided to the assistant, a follow-up discussion occurs. The assistant may dispute the evaluation if he/she so chooses. Records of evaluation were found in the administrative assistant's file.

The LEAP department chair is evaluated in the terminal year, which is the third one. The evaluation is carried out by the dean and it involves, but is not limited to, both a formal survey and interviews with faculty regarding the chair's effectiveness and an interview with the dean.

There was no documentation on site to indicate that the chair had been evaluated. While it is the case that the university does not require written evaluation feedback or records, this standard does require that written evaluations of the chair be conveyed in writing. Because no written records were available, it could not be confirmed that the chair had undergone regular evaluation and been provided with evaluation results.

The site response addressed faculty input and the role it played in the university decision tree regarding reappointment. The issue of chair evaluation being documented in writing was not addressed.

#### **Reporting Requirement 6**

By October 1, 2018, provide evidence that program chair is regularly evaluated and that evaluations results are conveyed to the chair in writing. (Administrative and Fiscal Capacity 5)

**Length and Structure of Program of Study Standard 2: The program or language institution's curricular design clearly indicates the levels of instruction and specifies how students progress through a full program of study.**

Levels of instruction and student progress through the program of study are clearly indicated in the LEAP curriculum handbook, in the student handbook, and on course syllabi. Reductions in program resources, however, have impacted student progress through the program. Levels 1, 3 and 5 are now only offered in the first block of the semester and Levels 2, 4 and 6 are offered in the second block. Thus, if a given student fails to meet the outcomes in Level 3 during the first block, they cannot repeat it in the second block because it is not offered then. Rather, they are moved on to the second block's Level 4. Interviews on site indicated that, if the student passed Level 4, they would retroactively pass Level 3. If the student did not pass Level 4, the next semester they would repeat Level 3 and then Level 4. As a result of the program's dealing with resource reductions in this manner, how students progress through the program differs from what is described in published materials. The situation also impacts whether progression decisions are based on achievement of course and level student learning outcomes (see Student Achievement Standard 2).

Furthermore, the standard requires 1) that the program monitor and document patterns of student progression through the courses and levels of the curriculum and 2) that the program is able to document that students, in the aggregate, progress through the program of study by achieving course, level, and program student learning outcomes as anticipated by the design of the curriculum. As data, LEAP provided 2015 and 2016 grade lists from summer, fall, and spring terms as well as a pie chart indicating passes and failures. This data does not provide sufficient evidence of aggregate pass/fail patterns, rates of promotion, time spent in levels, or analysis of patterns to identify unacceptable passing or progression rates.

In its response to the review team report, the site stated that the data described above as well as instructor insights into the students they have taught was, along with other curricular matters, a focus of discussion at a late September 2017 Curriculum Committee meeting. As a result of the discussion, changes were made to a few course SLOs and course goals. The program stated that faculty were satisfied that the present curriculum is successful, efficient and cohesive, and that the rate of success of their students is a reliable indicator of that success.

Concerns with the reduction of course offerings are addressed in the program's Student Achievement 2 response. The site concludes by stating that there is only now sufficient data drawn from the reduced offerings structure to undertake a comprehensive analysis of student progression. This analysis will be conducted in Spring 2018.

**Reporting Requirement 7**

By October 1, 2018 provide evidence that students, in the aggregate, progress through the program of study by achieving course, level and program student learning outcomes as anticipated by the design of the curriculum. If patterns of student achievement in courses and levels or patterns of progression through the program of study as a whole are not as anticipated, provide evidence of how the program is addressing the matter. (Length and Structure of Program of Study 2)

**Student Achievement Standard 1: The program or language institution has a placement system that is consistent with its admission requirements and allows valid and reliable placement of students into levels.**

Program students are placed using an in-house test consisting of timed reading and writing sections, an un-timed but self-limiting listening and note-taking section, and an oral interview with program faculty. Based upon results, students are placed in Levels 1-6, the level 7 academic bridge courses, or freshman English. During the first week of the term, students are closely observed or given a diagnostic exam. Processes are in place should an instructor or student feel misplacement has occurred, but such situations are rare, which supports the reliability and validity of the placement process.

Rubrics for the speaking and writing portions of the placement test were reviewed on site. It could not, however, be determined upon what basis students are placed into levels in the other skill areas.

In its response to the review team report, the site explained that the reading test consisted of 83 questions. A student's raw score on this section is converted into a percentage and that percentage is used for placement. The percentage cut-offs mirror those numbers listed in the writing rubric, e.g. Level 1: 1-10, Level 2: 11-20. The writing rubric was included with the response. No mention was made of how scores on listening and note-taking portions of the placement exam contributed to overall placement into courses.

#### **Reporting Requirement 8**

By October 1, 2018, provide documentation showing how placement test results in listening and note-taking are used in student placement. (Student Achievement 1)

**Student Achievement Standard 2: The program or language institution documents in writing whether students are ready to progress to the next level or to exit the program of study, using instruments or procedures that appropriately assess the achievement of student learning outcomes for courses taken within the curriculum.**

In-house, teacher-created assessments are used to determine level progression and exit from the program of study. Because some of the program's SLOs are not observable and measurable and because some courses lack SLOs (see Curriculum Standard 1), the program's assessments do not consistently measure student progress or SLO achievement.

Additionally, not all of the program's SLOs are assessed. Examples of where this is not the case come from Level 3, e.g. summarizing, making inferences; Level 4, e.g. outlining, compound and complex sentences; and Level 5, e.g. paraphrasing, supporting opinions. Also lacking is a system in place to ensure that course assessments are aligned with and consistently measure student learning outcomes of courses.

The program also uses indirect measures of achievement in determining students' grades, which themselves determine progression. As was verified on-site as well as on syllabi and in the student handbook, these indirect measures are attendance and homework completion. Alone or in combination, syllabi showed that the weight assigned to these measures ranged from 10-25% of a grade.

Last, due to recent program restructuring (see Length and Structure Standard 2), some students may pass to the next level despite failing the previous one and, depending on timing, may retroactively pass the failed one. In such cases, progress is not based upon assessed achievement.

In its response to the review team report, the program stated that it had addressed the review team's concerns with SLOs. This area of insufficient compliance has not been resolved. (see Curriculum 2)

Regarding assessment of SLOs, the program cited examples contained in the review team report and stated that in these cases SLOs were assessed through homework assignments. In the case of Level 3, they also mentioned a rubric provided to students with homework assignments and assessment through the midterm and final papers. No documentation was provided to verify these statements or to show evidence that SLOs had been appropriately assessed.

In terms of indirect measures of assessment, the site stated that assigned homework was not busy work and that each assignment served a purpose in relation to SLOs and progress measurement. The site went on to state that attendance was included as a grading factor to motivate students to attend classes and keep SEVIS, FAFSA or scholarship requirements.

With respect to the timing of course offerings/program restructuring, the program stated that if a student were able to pass a higher course after failing the previous one, this indicates that, during the higher course, they had mastered the skills of the earlier one. This is because skills are sequentially ordered and build upon themselves.

Because the response did not provide evidence of how assessments establish that homework, midterm, and final papers demonstrate direct evidence of achievement of SLOs, and because it is not clear how the indirect indicators of achievement (completion of homework and attendance) demonstrate achievement of SLOs, the following reporting requirement is issued.

**Note:** *The site is encouraged to consult with CEA staff on the requirements of the standard, which prohibit homework completion as a progression factor.*

#### **Reporting Requirement 9**

By October 1, 2018, provide evidence that program documents in writing whether students are ready to progress to the next level or to exit the program of study, using instruments or procedures that appropriately assess the achievement of student learning outcomes for courses taken within the curriculum. Provide evidence that progression decisions are based on direct evidence of achievement of student learning outcomes (Student Achievement 2)



**Student Achievement Standard 3: The program or language institution maintains and provides students with written reports that clearly indicate the level and language outcomes attained as a result of instruction.**

Students have electronic access to written course grade reports which can be printed from CANVAS should they so choose. Grades for individual assessments and percentages assigned to grading categories are displayed on the course Canvas pages. The program maintains records of end-of-term grades in student files in the program office; it does not keep copies of individual achievement reports.

The program's reporting system does not include an achievement scale indicating the range of language abilities as reflected in levels or an interpretation of the scale or an achievement scale which includes descriptors of observable and measurable student learning outcomes for each course at each level.

In its response to the review team report, the site stated that achievement and expectation descriptors can be found in the LEAP pages in the university catalog, which can be found on the university website. In its response, the site also noted that each individual syllabus contains the course's SLOs and an explanation of the university's grading system.

The site's curricular materials include a LEAP Department Curriculum Map, a chart which displays each of the courses in the program along with a descriptor of the purpose of the course. The curriculum map meets the requirement of the achievement scale and interpretation of the scale, but is available to faculty and administrators.

The site meets the requirements of the standard, but because it may be difficult for students and others who need to know to access the achievement scale and interpretation of the scale in the course catalog, course syllabi only show that course's SLOs, and the curriculum map is not widely available, a recommendation is issued to ensure that students or other interested parties could access the achievement scale and interpretation of the scale.

**Recommendation 1**

The site would benefit from making the curriculum map available and easily accessible to students and others who need to know. (Student Achievement 3)

**Program Development, Planning, and Review Standard 1: The program or language institution has a plan, in writing, for development of the program or language institution, including planning, implementation, and evaluation.**

The program has a written strategic plan which is available to faculty for review. The plan, however, lacks the following: tasks, processes, responsible parties, and timelines, and a list of documentation that provides explicit evidence that the plan has been implemented. The plan also lacks many of the areas defined as good practice in the standard's discussion. Additionally, evidence on site indicating plan implementation was insufficient and a review of faculty meeting notes did not include information about the systematic review of all features of the plan.

In its response to the review team report, a discussion of the decision chain for reviewing and updating the strategic plan was provided. The program also stated that the strategic plan would be reviewed at the Assessment meeting in November 2017. The response stated that the plan includes goals, implementations due, and completed implementations, and stated that this inclusion is the evidence that the plan has been reviewed and goals completed.

To ensure the most recent version of the written plan is reviewed with the site's response, the reporting requirement below asks for an updated copy of the plan.

#### **Reporting Requirement 10**

By October 1, 2018, provide a copy of a plan for the development of the program which contains the tasks, processes, responsible parties, and timelines, and a list of documentation that provides evidence that the plan has been implemented for review areas listed in the standard's discussion. Provide evidence of implementation of the plan. (Program Development, Planning, and Review 1)

**Program Development, Planning, and Review Standard 2: The program or language institution regularly reviews and revises its program components and has plans, in writing, to guide the review of curricular elements, student assessment practices, and student services policies and activities. The plans are systematically implemented.**

The program itself has a written plan for the review of curriculum and of assessment. It includes plan items and elements required by the standard and deals with review of textbooks, SLOs, curricular objectives, and final exams. It lacks, however, a list of documents to serve as evidence of plan implementation. Further, on-site evidence indicating that review has been taking place consistently was lacking, e.g. there was little evidence of the data or information that the site collects, analyzes, and uses to inform program changes.

The university provides the majority of student services used by the program and there are university processes in place for the review and planning of these services. There was no evidence, however, of how specific LEAP student services, such as orientation, advising, and social events, are reviewed and revised by the program.

In its response, the program discussed at some length how LEAP-specific student services are carried out. The response did not address these student services in relation to regular review and revision as reflected in a plan document, nor provide supporting evidence of implementation of the plan for review of curriculum and assessment.

To ensure the most recent version of the written plan is reviewed with the site's response, the reporting requirement below asks for an updated copy of the plan.

#### **Reporting Requirement 11**

By October 1, 2018, provide a copy of the plan(s) for the review and revision of curricular elements, student assessment practices, and student services policies and activities. Provide evidence of implementation of the plan(s). (Program Development, Planning, and Review 2)

**Submission Instructions**

Submit your report according to the CEA 1 YR Report Template, sent to the primary contact on file at the time of the accreditation decision and available electronically from the CEA Office upon request.

**Future review by the Commission**

Your response to the reporting requirements listed in this Commission Action Report will be reviewed by the Commission in order to make a decision regarding nine-year continued reaccreditation. If the site remains out of compliance with any standard, the Commission may not grant continued accreditation unless it has judged that the program is making a good-faith effort to come into compliance. In such case, initial accreditation will be continued, with future reporting required as determined by the Commission.