

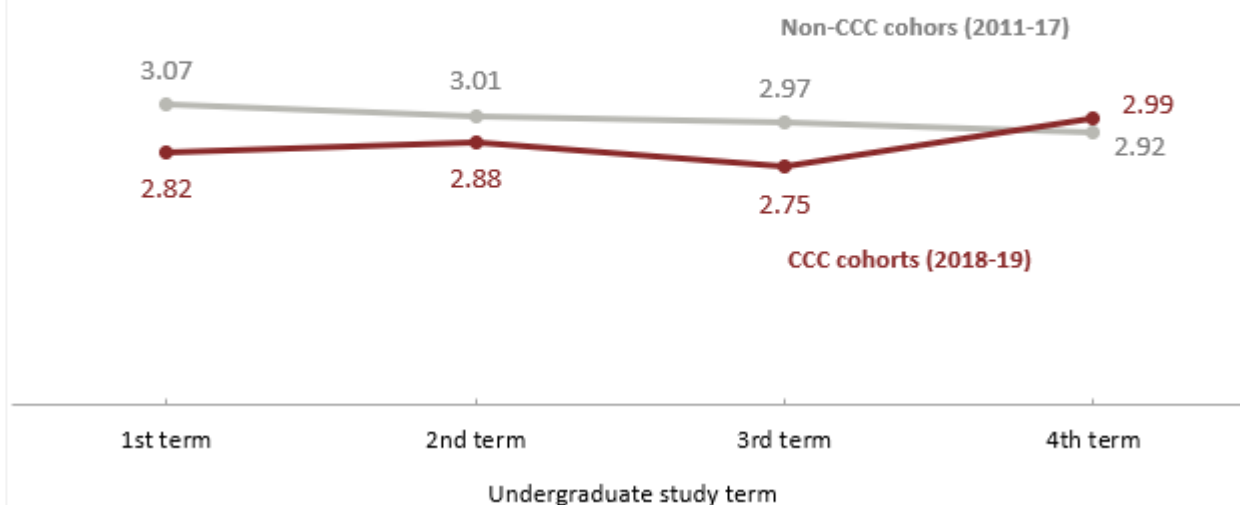
Has the average undergraduate grade changed since the implementation of the common core curriculum?

This study examines whether average grades have changed since the introduction of the common core curriculum (CCC). The analysis includes 6,175 undergraduate students enrolled at NU (Fall 2011 - Spring 2020) and their academic records during the first two years of undergraduate studies.

Analyses (Figure 1) revealed that the average term GPA for **CCC students** (N=2011) was lower (20-40% of a standard deviation – SD) in the first three terms compared to the average for previous, **non-CCC cohorts** (N=4164). In the fourth term, however, CCC and non-CCC cohorts had similar levels of performance.

Figure 1. Average term GPA before and after the common core curriculum (CCC)

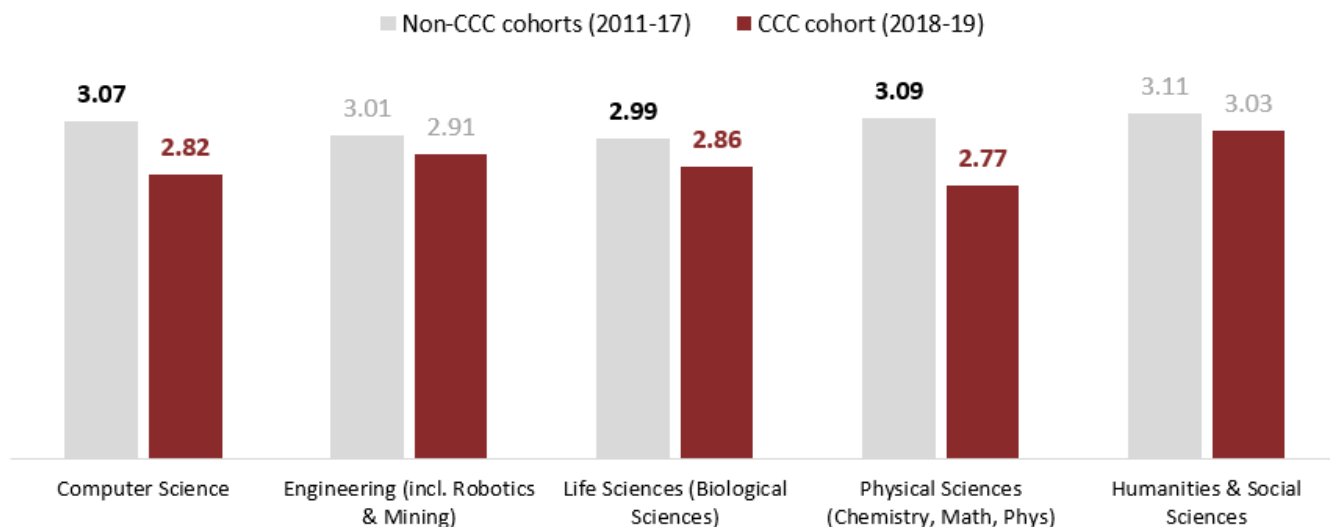
Average term GPA for **CCC students** was lower in the first three terms compared to the average GPA for previous, **non-CCC**, cohorts.



First- and second-year cumulative GPA was also lower for CCC compared to non-CCC cohorts (20-30% of a SD). The decrease in first-year Cumulative GPA was observed in all fields; it was more pronounced in Computer Science and Physical Sciences (Figure 2). The difference in Cumulative GPA was not particularly meaningful in the second year (except for Computer Science and, to a lesser extent, Engineering).

Figure 2. First-year cumulative GPA before and after the CCC program, by field

First-year cumulative GPA was lower for CCC students in all fields, more particularly in Computer Science, Life Sciences, and Physical Sciences (25% to 50% of a standard deviation).



Analyses of 110,000 course grades revealed that the percent of courses in which students earned at least a *B+* followed the same trend as the term GPA trend in Figure 1. In the first year, CCC students earned at least a *B+* in 43% of the courses taken compared to 52% for non-CCC students (a difference of 30% of a SD). The difference was more pronounced in Computer Science and Physical Sciences. In the second year, this difference evaporated, except in Life Sciences (where CCC cohorts performed better compared to non-CCC cohorts).

In sum, there has been a decrease in average GPA during the first two years of undergraduate studies since the CCC program implementation. This decrease, however, is more pronounced in some fields compared to others. Also, the difference in cumulative grades tends to be smaller/negligible at the end of the second year.