

Package ‘CurricularComplexity’

August 21, 2026

Type Package

Title Toolkit for Analyzing Curricular Complexity

Version 1.1.0

Author David Reeping [aut, cre]

Maintainer David Reeping <reepindp@ucmail.uc.edu>

Description Enables educational researchers and practitioners to calculate the curricular complexity of a plan of study, visualize its prerequisite structure at scale, and conduct customizable analyses. The original tool can be found at <<https://curricularanalytics.org>>. Additional functions to explore curriculum complexity from the literature are also included.

Depends R (>= 3.6.2), igraph (>= 1.2.5)

Encoding UTF-8

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Suggests knitr, rmarkdown

VignetteBuilder knitr

RoxygenNote 7.3.3

NeedsCompilation no

Repository CRAN

Date/Publication 2026-08-21 05:46:55 UTC

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admissibility_test	<i>Automatically check for data entry issues</i>
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Description

This function takes in a plan of study, then checks for potential data entry issues. It will detect issues in formatting with the csv (such as notes creating empty rows), if there are cycles in the network, and if pre- and corequisites are appropriately defined.

Usage

```
admissibility_test(plan_of_study)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function

Value

List of errors to correct for cycles, prereqs, and coreqs

average_sequencing	<i>Calculates the average sequencing in a program</i>
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Description

This function calculates the average sequencing in the program using the delay factors of the courses. The second argument, `expected_time_to_degree` is optional. If it is not NULL, the average sequencing will be for courses extending the student's time to degree.

Usage

```
average_sequencing(plan_of_study, expected_time_to_degree = NULL)
```

Arguments

`plan_of_study` igraph object - An igraph object created using the `create_plan_of_study` function
`expected_time_to_degree`
 Numeric - The term where students are expected to finish (often 8)

Value

Numeric - the average sequencing in the program

blocking_factor	<i>Calculates the blocking factor of a course</i>
-----------------	---

Description

This function takes in a plan of study and a course, then finds that course's blocking factor. The value is the number of courses 'blocked' by failing the given course.

Usage

```
blocking_factor(plan_of_study, course, include_coreqs = TRUE)
```

Arguments

`plan_of_study` igraph object - An igraph object created using the `create_plan_of_study` function
`course` Numeric (vertex id) or String - The course to calculate the blocking factor of
`include_coreqs` logical - Indicates whether corequisites should be included in the calculation

Value

Numeric - the blocking factor

core_collapse	<i>Calculates the core collapse sequence for a plan of study</i>
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Description

This function takes in a plan of study network and constructs the "core collapse sequence." The core collapse sequence progressively removes courses from the plan of study with increasing prereq counts and calculates the proportion of courses deleted at each step. The process stops when all of the vertices have been removed. A sequence that decreases quickly to zero typically indicates that the network is generally uniform with its prereqs. A sequence with more erratic values that does not settle to zero smoothly would imply more dense sets of prereqs.

Usage

```
core_collapse(plan_of_study)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function

Value

List of two items: (1) sequence - the core collapse sequence, (2) the associated network for each entry

create_plan_of_study	<i>Create a plan of study igraph object</i>
----------------------	---

Description

This function takes in a set of courses, their terms, prerequisites, and corequisites. Optional arguments include the number of credits, pass rates, lost credits from transferring, and the frequency of course offerings. The function creates an igraph structure of edges and nodes with the given qualities.

Usage

```
create_plan_of_study(
  Course,
  Term,
  Prereq,
  Coreq,
  Credits = NULL,
  LostCredits = NULL,
  PassRate = NULL,
  Timing = NULL,
  Institution = NULL
)
```

Arguments

Course	atomic vector - strings for each course
Term	a numeric atomic vector - the term each course is offered
Prereq	atomic vector - strings of the courses' prereqs, separated by commas
Coreq	atomic vector - strings of the courses' coreqs, separated by commas
Credits	numeric atomic vector - number of credits each course is worth (optional)
LostCredits	numeric atomic vector - (for transfer students) identifies if credit for the course is not applied toward a student's degree, 1. If it is, 0. (optional)
PassRate	numeric atomic vector - pass rates by class (optional)
Timing	numeric atomic vector - number of times the course is offered in 2 years (optional)
Institution	atomic vector - strings of course affiliations (CC or FY)

Details

It is recommended that the user imports the data from a csv file to ensure the indices for each atomic vector correspond to the attributes of one course.

Value

An igraph object of the prerequisite structure

cruciality	<i>Calculates the cruciality of a course</i>
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Description

This function takes in a plan of study and a course, then finds that course's cruciality. The value is the sum of the blocking and delay factors of the course

Usage

```
cruciality(plan_of_study, course, include_coreqs = TRUE)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study	igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function
course	Numeric (vertex id) or String - The course to calculate the cruciality of
include_coreqs	logical - Indicates whether corequisites should be included in the calculation

Value

Numeric - the course's cruciality

curriculum_rigidity	<i>Calculates the curriculum rigidity</i>
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Description

This function takes in a plan of study and then finds the curriculum's rigidity. The rigidity is the beta index of the graph, which is the number of prerequisites divided by the number of courses

Usage

```
curriculum_rigidity(plan_of_study)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function

Value

Numeric - the curriculum rigidity

deferment_factor	<i>Calculates the deferment factor of a course</i>
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Description

This function takes in a plan of study and a course, then finds that course's deferment factor. The value captures the number of terms the student can fail the course before extending their time to degree.

Usage

```
deferment_factor(
  plan_of_study,
  course,
  expected_time_to_degree,
  outbound_only = TRUE
)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function

course Numeric (vertex id) or String - The course to calculate the deferment factor of

expected_time_to_degree Numeric - The term where students are expected to finish (often 8)

outbound_only logical - TRUE (by default) if the calculation should only include courses after the course (postreqs)

Value

Numeric - the deferment factor

delay_factor	<i>Calculates the delay factor of a course</i>
--------------	--

Description

This function takes in a plan of study and a course, then finds that course's delay factor. The output is the longest path of prerequisites through the given course.

Usage

```
delay_factor(plan_of_study, course, include_coreqs = TRUE)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function

course Numeric (vertex id) or String - The course to calculate the delay factor of

include_coreqs Logical - Calculates the delay factor using corequisites, default value is TRUE

Value

Numeric - the delay factor

explained_complexity	<i>Calculates the explained complexity of courses extending time to degree</i>
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Description

This function takes in the subcomplexity graph from the transfer excess courses function, then finds the transfer delay factor. The output is the proportion of complexity explained by courses extending time to degree.

Usage

```
explained_complexity(
  plan_of_study,
  expected_time_to_degree,
  term_weighted = FALSE
)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function

expected_time_to_degree Numeric - The term where students are expected to finish (often 8)

term_weighted logical - TRUE if crucialities should be term-weighted

Value

Numeric - the explained complexity

find_bottlenecks	<i>Finds the bottlenecks in the plan of study based on prerequisite relationships</i>
------------------	---

Description

This function takes in a plan of study and three parameters. In this case, we choose min_prereq, min_postreq, and min_connections. The value of min_prereq is the minimum number of prerequisites defining a bottleneck (in the user's perspective), whereas min_postreq is the minimum number of courses the given course is a prerequisite for. Finally, min_connections is the minimum total of the number of prerequisites and the number of courses the given course is a prerequisite for. A course is a bottleneck if it meets at least one of the parameters

Usage

```
find_bottlenecks(
  plan_of_study,
  min_prereq = 3,
  min_postreq = 3,
  min_connections = 5,
  include_coreqs = TRUE
)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function

min_prereq numeric - minimum number of prerequisites defining a bottleneck

min_postreq numeric - minimum number of courses the given course is a prerequisite for

min_connections numeric - minimum total of the number of prerequisites

include_coreqs boolean - default is TRUE, treats corequisites as prerequisites and the number of courses the given course is a prerequisite for

Details

Suggested values for typical usage is `find_bottleneck(x,3,3,5)`, which are #' provided by default. Note that `min_connections >= min_prereq + min_postreq - 2`. If this is violated, a warning is provided and corrected to the suggested minimum value of `min_prereq + min_postreq - 2`.

The output is an atomic vector of possible bottlenecks based on the user-defined parameters.

Value

atomic vector - list of courses meeting at least one condition of the three parameters

`find_inbound_courses` *Find all possible prerequisites to a course*

Description

This function takes in a plan of study and a course, then finds all the courses it is related to through its prerequisites

Usage

```
find_inbound_courses(plan_of_study, course, include_coreqs = TRUE)
```

Arguments

`plan_of_study` An igraph object created using the `create_plan_of_study` function
`course` The course to find all relevant prerequisites of
`include_coreqs` Logical - Calculates the delay factor using corequisites, default value is TRUE

Value

An atomic vector of vertex ids for the course's prerequisites

`find_number_of_free_terms`
Finds the number of terms a course can move to

Description

This function takes in a plan of study, a course, the expected time to degree, and a logical value indicating whether to restrict the number of free terms to those later in the curriculum. The value is the number of free terms that the course can move to

Usage

```
find_number_of_free_terms(
  plan_of_study,
  course,
  expected_time_to_degree,
  outbound_only
)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function

course Numeric (vertex id) or String - The course to find the number of free terms for

expected_time_to_degree Numeric - The term where students are expected to finish (often 8)

outbound_only logical - TRUE if the calculation should only include courses after the course (postreqs)

Value

Numeric - the number of free terms

find_outbound_courses *Find all possible courses that depend on a particular course*

Description

This function takes in a plan of study and a course, then finds all the courses it is related to through its prerequisites (after the course).

Usage

```
find_outbound_courses(plan_of_study, course, include_coreqs = TRUE)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function

course The course to find all relevant courses that directly or indirectly have it as a prereq

include_coreqs Logical - Calculates the delay factor using corequisites, default value is TRUE

Value

An atomic vector of vertex ids for the course's following courses

generate_curricular_complexity_scorecard

Generate a scorecard of curricular complexity metrics

Description

This function calculates course-level and curriculum-level curricular complexity metrics for a plan of study. Course-level metrics include blocking, reachability, delay, cruciality, deferment, and bottleneck status. Curriculum-level metrics include structural complexity, curricular rigidity, and the total number of bottleneck courses.

Usage

```
generate_curricular_complexity_scorecard(plan_of_study, include_coreqs = TRUE)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study An igraph object representing a plan of study, created using the [create_plan_of_study](#) function.

include_coreqs A logical value indicating whether corequisite courses should be included when calculating course-level metrics and structural complexity.

Value

A list containing two elements:

CourseLevel A data frame containing the course-level metrics Course, Blocking, Reachability, Delay, Cruciality, Deferment, and Bottleneck. An asterisk in the Bottleneck column indicates that the course was identified as a bottleneck.

CurriculumLevel A named vector containing the curriculum-level metrics StructuralComplexity, CurricularRigidity, and TotalBottlenecks.

inflexibility_factor *Calculates inflexibility factor of a plan of study*

Description

Calculates the inflexibility factor for courses that have specific offering times extending chains beyond the expected time to degree.

Usage

```
inflexibility_factor(plan_of_study, time_to_degree)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function
 time_to_degree numeric - expected time to degree, often 8

Value

list of (1) a dataframe of inflexibility factors and (2) a total inflexibility factor

plot_plan_of_study *Plots the plan of study with courses ordered by term*

Description

This function takes in a plan of study and plots it in the 'plot' window. The courses are ordered horizontally by term and vertically by the outdegree (i.e., number of prereqs) of the vertices in that column/term. The shading of the nodes corresponds to the cruciality of the course. A darker blue indicates higher cruciality while white indicates lower cruciality.

Usage

```
plot_plan_of_study(plan_of_study)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function

Details

Note that there can be some overlap where a course is covering a path for a prereq, which may make it seem like a course is a prereq for some other course when it is in fact the course in a previous semester.

Value

Plots the plan of study in the 'plot' window

reachability_factor	<i>Calculates the reachability factor of a course</i>
---------------------	---

Description

This function takes in a plan of study and a course, then finds that course's reachability factor. The value is the number of courses needed to be passed before enrolling in the given course.

Usage

```
reachability_factor(plan_of_study, course, include_coreqs = TRUE)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study	igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function
course	Numeric (vertex id) or String - The course to calculate the blocking factor of
include_coreqs	logical - Indicates whether corequisites should be included in the calculation

Value

Numeric - the reachability factor

simplify_requisites	<i>Convert requisites to original notation</i>
---------------------	--

Description

This function takes in either the pre or corequisites of a plan of study as a vector, then removes any additional information like OR relationships and minimum grades such that the network can be analyzed using the traditional functions.

Usage

```
simplify_requisites(requisites)
```

Arguments

requisites	vector object - A vector describing the pre and corequisites (as strings)
------------	---

Value

vector object - A simplified vector describing the pre and corequisites (as strings)

`structural_complexity` *Calculates structural complexity of a plan of study*

Description

This function takes in a plan of study, then finds the plan of study's structural complexity.

Usage

```
structural_complexity(
  plan_of_study,
  term_weighted = FALSE,
  include_coreqs = TRUE,
  quarters = FALSE
)
```

Arguments

<code>plan_of_study</code>	igraph object - An igraph object created using the <code>create_plan_of_study</code> function
<code>term_weighted</code>	logical - TRUE if crucialities should be term-weighted
<code>include_coreqs</code>	logical - TRUE if coreqs should be included when calculating blocking and delay factor
<code>quarters</code>	logical - TRUE if the plan of study uses quarters instead of semesters

Value

list of (1) a dataframe of course crucialities, delay factors, and blocking factors; (2) a numeric value of structural complexity

`student_mobility_turbulence`
Calculates the student mobility turbulence for a program

Description

This metric captures the volatility in student progression by analyzing the withdraws and major changes, which can indicate structural barriers or inefficiencies in the curriculum. This is most useful to apply to a combination of programs or a unit, like a department or college. There are two coefficients, `withdrawn` and `changed_major` that can be used to prioritize either of the two causes for turbulence. They are set to 1 and 0.5 by default, respectively.

Usage

```
student_mobility_turbulence(
  number_withrawn,
  number_changed_major,
  total_number_of_students,
  withdrawn_coefficient = 1,
  changed_major_coefficient = 0.5
)
```

Arguments

`number_withrawn`
 numeric - the total number of students who dropped out of a program in a given unit

`number_changed_major`
 numeric - the total number of students who changed majors in a given unit

`total_number_of_students`
 numeric - the total number of students in a given unit starting at a specific time

`withdrawn_coefficient`
 numeric - a coefficient weighting the number of students who dropped out

`changed_major_coefficient`
 numeric - a coefficient weighting the number of students who changed majors out

Value

numeric - The student mobility turbulence

`subcomplexity_graph` *Creates a subcomplexity graph for a course*

Description

This function takes in a plan of study and course, then constructs the subcomplexity graph for the course.

Usage

```
subcomplexity_graph(plan_of_study, course)
```

Arguments

`plan_of_study` `igraph` object - An `igraph` object created using the `create_plan_of_study` function

`course` Numeric (vertex id) or String - The course to find the subcomplexity graph of

Value

`igraph` object representing the course's subcomplexity graph.

topic_cruciality	<i>Calculate Topic Cruciality</i>
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Description

Calculates the cruciality attributable to a particular course-code stem within a plan of study. Topic cruciality is calculated as the sum of the cruciality values for all courses in the plan of study whose course code matches the specified course-code stem.

Usage

```
topic_cruciality(plan_of_study, course_code_stem, include_coreqs = TRUE)
```

Arguments

`plan_of_study` A plan of study for which course crucialities can be calculated.

`course_code_stem` A character string identifying the course-code stem used to define the topic area. For example, "MATH" identifies all mathematics courses with the "MATH" course-code stem.

`include_coreqs` A logical value indicating whether corequisite relationships should be included when calculating course crucialities. Defaults to TRUE.

Details

This measure is generalized from the concept of math cruciality described by Ryan (2026), which examines the contribution of required mathematics courses to curriculum complexity. Rather than being restricted to mathematics, this function can be used to calculate the cruciality of any collection of courses that can be identified by a common course-code stem.

Value

The topic cruciality, calculated as the sum of the cruciality values for courses in the plan of study with the specified course-code stem.

References

Ryan, O. J. (2026). *The Role of Math Courses in Engineering Education: Examining How Math Courses Shape First-Year Student Transition, Curriculum Complexity, and Time-to-Degree* (Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Tech). <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/items/4ddd7b33-8700-45d4-988d-2111a2970389>

transfer_delay_factor *Calculates the transfer delay factor of a course*

Description

This function takes in the subcomplexity graph from the transfer excess courses function, then finds the transfer delay factor. The output is the sum of the longest paths of prerequisites through courses related to those beyond the expected time to degree.

Usage

```
transfer_delay_factor(plan_of_study, expected_time_to_degree)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function
 expected_time_to_degree
 Numeric - The term where students are expected to finish (often 8)

Value

Numeric - the transfer delay factor

transfer_excess_courses
 Finds the subcomplexity graph of courses beyond expected time to degree

Description

This function takes in a plan of study and the expected time to degree, then outputs a subcomplexity graph that contains all of the courses beyond the time to degree and their prerequisites.

Usage

```
transfer_excess_courses(  
  plan_of_study,  
  expected_time_to_degree,  
  include_coreqs = TRUE  
)
```

Arguments

plan_of_study igraph object - An igraph object created using the create_plan_of_study function
 expected_time_to_degree
 Numeric - The term where students are expected to finish (often 8)
 include_coreqs Logical - Calculates the delay factor using corequisites, default value is TRUE

Value

igraph object - the subcomplexity graph

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