

## Credit Course Standards

The standards that follow are a compilation of both California Code of Administrative Regulations (“CCR”) regulatory standards and local expectations of what constitutes a college level credit course. Initially, there are five (5) criteria that the Chancellor’s Office has identified as minimum standards for new course proposals:

1. **Appropriateness to Mission:** Are the objectives of the course consistent with both the mission of California Community Colleges and the master plan of the college?
2. **Need:** Literally, is there a need for the course at this time and in this region?
3. **Quality:** Will the course effectively meet its objectives? And will the course possess standards that meet the college’s expectations of a rigorous, academic, college level course?
4. **Feasibility:** Will the college be able to offer the resources to support the course and able to realistically offer the course at least once every two years?
5. **Compliance:** Does the course comply with all laws and regulations governing education in California?

Assuming that the previously mentioned CCR criteria have been met through examination by the course author and the respective department, a college level credit course must meet the following quality standards:

1. **Grading Policy:** Does the course provide for measurement of student performance based upon uniformly applied standards? In addition, are grades based upon demonstrated subject proficiency by means of essays, or where appropriate, problem solving exercises or skills demonstrations? Essentially, the course must have a grading policy that is clearly based on the course objectives.
2. **Units:** Does the course grant units of credit based upon a formula established by the CCRs? This formula is quite simply a relationship between the number of hours the student is in contact with the instructor and whether the contact is in lecture or laboratory format. An important item to note here is that LBCC believes in and applies the standard of the Carnegie Unit. Initially, this means that a course will require a minimum of three hours of work per week, including class time, for each unit of credit.
3. **Intensity:** Does the course treat the subject matter with a scope and intensity that requires students to study independently outside of class? The term rigor is often applied to both this standard and the next standard, Difficulty. Does the course content demand of the student sufficient rigor to justify being called a college level credit course? Rigor is most simply defined as: 1) the effort required to succeed, 2)

the energy demanded to accomplish, and 3) the challenge set forth that moves a student to a new level of achievement. Overall, is the curriculum identified in the Course Outline demanding enough to warrant the title college level credit course? For an example, see [Link to LBCC curriculum data base]

4. **Difficulty:** Does the course work call for critical thinking and the understanding and application of concepts determined by the Course Evaluation Subcommittee to be at college level? As noted above with reference to rigor, this standard has the additional requirement of critical thinking. Critical thinking in a course asks questions that require a “chain of reasoning” and/or for which there is not one right answer but multiple criteria for judging answers. Critical thinking poses non-routine problems and requires explicit analysis and evaluation of the answers against criteria appropriate to the field. This highly important concept is fundamental to any credit course and the Course Evaluation Subcommittee examines this standard with particular interest. It should be noted here that it is assumed that a college level credit course will demand critical thinking of the student. Therefore, what evidence does the Course Outline provide that persuades the reader that critical thinking will actually be taking place?
5. **Level:** Does the course presuppose learning, communication, and computation skills and a vocabulary that the Course Evaluation Subcommittee deems appropriate for a college level course? Again, what evidence is provided to assure the reader that this standard is being met? Courses requiring college level work teach theory, principles, and concepts. These courses ground specific applications and skills in the core concepts of a discipline or field and the applications are general enough to be useful in a variety of situations.

In addition to the prior standards, there are two supplementary items to be taken into consideration in the preparation of a new course:

### **Course Outline of Record**

Is the course described in a Course Outline that is maintained in official college files and made available to each instructor? Does the Course Outline of Record include course objectives as well as specifying types of reading and writing assignments required? In addition, the Course Outline of Record should delineate the methods used to teach the course and what criteria will be used to evaluate the student’s accomplishment of the stated objectives. The Course Outline of Record should be complete, including:

1. **Scope** – goals, description, need.
2. **Objectives** – student learning outcomes.
3. **Content** – topics and substance.
4. **Text** – types or examples.

5. **Assignments** – types or examples.
6. **Evaluation** – the basis of student grades.

The Course Outline should also provide sufficient guidance to assure comparable levels of student achievement across different sections. The Course Outline of Record should be coherent. Based on CCR parameters, “‘Course specifications’ (i.e. assignments, methods, materials, evaluations) taken together...typically enable any student who successfully completes all of the assigned work prescribed in the Course Outline to successfully meet the course objectives.”

### **Conduct of the Course**

Will a qualified instructor who has access to the above referenced Course Outline of Record teach all sections of the course? There are several valuable discussions of the more elusive or abstract standards just discussed—the following descriptions may prove helpful:

*College Level Curriculum Factors*. Dr. Nancy Glock. Curriculum Specialist, Chancellor’s Office, California Community Colleges

*Good Practices for Course Approval Processes*. CCC Ad Hoc Curriculum Subcommittee, “Carnegie Unit” 1996-1998.

*Standards and Criteria for Courses and Classes*. Section 55002 of the Program and Course Approval Handbook, CCC Chancellor’s Office, 2001.

*Considerations Involved in Determining What Constitutes a Baccalaureate Level Course*. Document prepared by the Academic Senate for the California State University. [c. 2001].