

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:** The intent and outcomes of the course must be consistent with both the mission of California Community Colleges and the master plan of the college, as defined in California Education Code § 66010.4 and in the college’s catalog.
- 2. Need:** Literally, there must be an educational need for the course at this time and in this region. How the course relates to, or differs from, similar courses should be distinguished. New career, technical and transfer programs place external research requirements on demonstrating need for these programs and courses. **For transfer programs** and courses, this need is more easily established by determining both student demand and transfer applicability for existing university majors. **For career technical programs** and courses, this need is significantly more challenging to establish and must rely on such things as researching labor market data, potential employer needs, advisory committee input, and job advertising information, to name a few.
- 3. Quality:** The course outline effectively demonstrates that the proposed course meets its course level outcomes and aligns with program and institutional outcomes. The course must possess standards that meet the college’s expectations of a rigorous, academic, college level course.
- 4. Feasibility:** The college will be able to offer the necessary resources to support the course and able to realistically offer the course at least once every two years.
- 5. Compliance:** The course complies with all state and federal laws and regulations governing education in California.

Quality Elements

Assuming that the previously mentioned CCR criteria have been met through examination by the course author and the respective faculty of the department/program, a credit course must meet the following quality standards: Grading policy, units, intensity, difficulty and level apply to all credit courses. These standards are the criteria by which the developer’s intention to ensure quality will be assessed for collegiate or pre-collegiate level instruction. Intensity, difficulty, and level are not reflected as discrete elements in the course outline of record but rather these standards are met within the totality of the course outline.

- 1. Grading Policy:** The course must provide for the measurement of student performance based upon uniformly applied standards. In addition, grades are 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 (assignment and evaluation pages) that is clearly based on the course’s student learning outcomes and objectives.
- 2. Units:** The course will grant units of credit based upon a formula established by the CCR Title 5, Chapter 6, Section 55002.5, Credit Hour. This formula is a relationship between the number of hours the student is in contact with the instructor and whether the contact is in lecture, laboratory and/or study format (content and instruction pages). LBCC applies the standard of the Carnegie Unit.

- * 1 lecture hour (plus two hours of homework)/week = 1 unit;
- * 3 laboratory hours/week = 1 unit;
- * 1 Work Experience unit = 75 hrs of paid work or 60 hours of volunteer work each semester.

The amount of credit awarded shall be adjusted in proportion to the number of hours of lecture, study, or laboratory in half unit increments.

Example: Lecture Hours

4.0 lecture hours = 4 units of credit

4.5 lecture hours = 4.5 units of credit

Example: Lab Hour

1.5 lab hours = .5 unit of credit

3 lab hours = 1 unit of credit

4.5 lab hours = 1.5 units of credit

Example: Lecture/Lab Class

5.5 Lecture/7.0 Lab

5.5 Lecture hours = 5.5 units

7.0 lab hours = 2.0 units

Course total = 7.5 units

3. Intensity: The course treats the subject matter with a scope and depth that requires students to study independently outside of class (content, instruction, and assignment pages). The course content demands of the student must be of sufficient intensity to justify being called a college level credit course. Intensity is most simply defined as: 1) the effort required to succeed, 2) the energy demanded to accomplish the learning outcomes and objectives, and 3) the challenge set forth that moves a student to a new level of achievement. Overall, the curriculum identified in the Course Outline of Record is demanding enough to warrant the title college level credit course. The term rigor is often applied to both this standard and the next standard, difficulty.

4. Difficulty: The course work calls for critical thinking and the understanding and application of concepts determined by the Course Evaluation Subcommittee to be at college level (student learning outcomes and objectives, content, assignment and evaluation pages). 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, the Course Outline of Record must provide evidence that persuades the reader that critical thinking will actually be taking place.

5. Level: The course presupposes learning, communication, and computation skills and a vocabulary that the Course Evaluation Subcommittee deems appropriate for a college level course. Again, the Course Outline of Record must provide evidence to assure the reader that this standard is being met (student learning outcomes and objectives, content, assignment, and evaluation pages). 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.

For **degree-applicable** courses, difficulty calls for critical thinking, understanding and application of concepts at the college level and intensity sets a requirement that most students will need to study independently, possibly for periods beyond that of the total course time defined by the unit(s). The outline should build the case that students will be required to study independently outside of the class time (intensity). Reading, writing and other outside assignments qualify to fulfill both “study” time as defined in the credit hour and the “independent study” required to demonstrate intensity. The course developer who creates a course based solely upon laboratory/activity or lecture time with no designated outside study time (e.g. students are in the class all mandated hours per unit) will still need to demonstrate a depth and breadth of student learning that requires student effort beyond class time. The level standard requires college level learning skills and vocabulary.

For **nondegree-applicable** credit courses, the intensity standard requires instruction in critical thinking and refers to the preparation of students for the independent work they will do in degree-applicable courses, including the development of self-direction and self-motivation. The level standard is also not required for nondegree-applicable courses, but factors such as the units standard should reflect course workload variations appropriate to the developmental level of the students. And nothing prohibits a nondegree-applicable course

from having elements that do meet these two standards.

There is one standard for approval for **noncredit** courses, which is a broader standard that places the burden upon the Course Evaluation Subcommittee for determining that the level, rigor and quality is appropriate for the enrolled students.

Standard Elements

Beyond the aforementioned quality standards **degree-applicable** courses are required by Title 5, Section 55002 to meet two further requirements.

1. *Prerequisites and Corequisites.* All courses with requisites must demonstrate such a need by documenting those skills through content review in a separate section on the course outline. The primary goal of identifying requisites is to facilitate student success. When a student is highly unlikely to receive a satisfactory grade unless the student has the knowledge or skills not taught in the course, then the course shall require prerequisites or corequisites.
2. *Basic Skills Requirements.* If success in the course is dependent upon communication or computation skills, then the course shall require as a prerequisite or corequisite, eligibility for enrollment in associate degree credit courses in English, reading, and/or mathematics, respectively.

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

1. Course Outline of Record

A Course Outline of Record needs to be integrated. At the most fundamental level “integration” occurs when each element of the course outline of record reinforces the purpose of the other elements in the course outline. There should be an **obvious relationship** between the learning outcomes and objectives of the course, the methods of instruction, assignments, and methods of evaluation used to promote and evaluate student mastery of those outcomes and objectives.

The Course Outline of Record should be maintained in official college files and made available to each instructor. It must include course learning outcomes and objectives as well as specifying types of required reading and writing assignments. 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 learning outcomes and objectives by the assignments described. The Course Outline of Record should be complete, by including:

1. Scope – goals, description, need and audience (catalog description).
2. Outcomes & Objectives – broad, core outcomes and narrow, specific objectives.
3. Content – topics and concepts.
4. Instruction – methodologies appropriate to obtain student learning.
5. Assignments – representative types with purpose.
6. Evaluation – the basis of student grades with evaluation standards.
7. Text – sampling of appropriate types or examples.

The Course Outline of Record should also provide sufficient guidance to assure comparable levels of student achievement across different sections. The Course Outline 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 [outcomes].”

2. Conduct of the Course

Qualified instructors (meet minimum qualifications or equivalency) teach all sections of the course and have access to the above referenced Course Outline of Record.

Critique Process

The curriculum approval process is based on mandated regulations, legal opinions, and Chancellor's Office guidelines, but also encompasses the interpretation of standards of good practice derived from various curriculum authorities to establish local interpretations that are rigorous, effective, fair and consistent. This collaboration between the Course Evaluation Subcommittee and course developer is constrained by such pragmatics but does provide for essential dialogue in its protocols. Thus, the faculty author's approach will be reflected in the nature and results of such a critique process. The ultimate objective is to develop a course that will provide well-conceived student learning that will stand up to any inside or outside review and will contribute to the mission of the college.

This awareness is beneficial but developers do not need to become curriculum experts themselves as the Course Evaluation Subcommittee is charged with that responsibility for the college. However, the faculty author's responsibility is to communicate, plan, and participate with the subcommittee to obtain the strongest possible written expression of the concept and specifics of a course. This is ultimately a collaborative critique process set within the constraints of established federal, state, and local requirements.

There are several valuable resources and discussions of the more elusive or abstract standards just discussed—the following sources may prove helpful:

LBCC Curriculum Document and Process Justification Course Evaluation Subcommittee November 26, 2008

These are the regulations, guidelines, and standards of good practice that are referenced by this subcommittee.

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

“The Course Outline of Record: A Curriculum Reference Guide”
Adopted, Spring 2008

“Guidelines for Good Practice: Effective Instructor-Student Contact in
Distance Learning”
Spring 1999

“Stylistic Considerations in Writing Course Outlines of Record”
Spring 1998

“Good Practices for Course Approval Processes”
Spring 1998

“Good Practice for the Implementation of Prerequisites”
Spring 1997

“Guidelines for Good Practice: Technology Mediated Instruction”
Fall 1997

“Components of a Model Course Outline of Record”
November 1995

“Placement of Courses within Disciplines”
April 1994

“Role of the Course Outline”
Undated
Curriculum Development Webpage

“Joint Review for Library/Learning Resources by Classroom and Library Faculty for New Courses and Programs”

Undated

Curriculum Good Practices Webpage

California Community College Chancellor’s Office

Program and Course Approval Handbook

Third Edition, March 2009

“Taxonomy of Programs: California Community Colleges”

California Community Colleges

Sixth Edition—Corrected Version, November 2004

“Faculty/Staff Minimum Qualifications (formerly Credentials)”

California Community Colleges

Current edition

“Supplemental Learning Assistance and Tutoring Regulations and Guidelines”

April 2006

Data Elements Dictionary

California Community Colleges

January 2008

“Distance Education Guidelines”

2008 Omnibus Version

“Prerequisites, Corequisites, Advisories, and Limitations on Enrollment”

Fall 1997

“The Model District Policy on Prerequisites, Corequisites, and Advisories on Recommended Preparation”

Board of Governors

September 1993

The Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum

Board of Governors

Adopted, March 15, 1991

California Code of Regulations: Title 5, Division 6, Chapter 6

§55002	Standards & Criteria for Courses
§55003	Policies on Prerequisites, Corequisites, Advisories on Recommended Preparation
§55100	Course Approval
§55182	Assessment of Needs & Preferences
§55150	Approval of Noncredit Courses & Programs
§55152	Short-Term Vocational Programs Providing 288 Hours or More of Instruction
§55153	Other Noncredit Programs Providing 288 Hours or More of Instruction
§55200-55210	Distance Education

California Education Code

66010.4	Educational Missions
66720-66722.5	Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum
70901	Creation of the California Community Colleges

**Accrediting Commission for Community & Junior Colleges (ACCJC)
Western Association of Schools & Colleges**

Accreditation Standards
Approved, June 2002

Accreditation Reference Handbook
August 2007

- Policy on Distance Learning, Including Electronically-Mediated Learning
Revised, June 2005
- Policy on Award of Credit
Adopted, June 2004

California State Legislature

AB 1725, Vasconcellos, September 19, 1988

This bill legislates changes to provisions governing the California Community Colleges in the general subject areas of governance; mission and functions; faculty, administrators and staff; and access to programs and the success of participants. (i.e. minimum qualifications and IGETC)

California State University Chancellor's Office

Executive Order Number 1033: General Education-Breadth Requirements

Effective Date: June 18, 2008

Lower Division Transfer Pattern (LDTP)

Effective Date: March 17, 2005

Executive Order Number 595: General Education-Breadth Requirements

Effective Date: January 1, 1993

Executive Order Number 167: Transfer of Credit AKA Baccalaureate List

Effective Date: January 26, 1973

Academic Senate of the California State University

“Considerations Involved in Determining What Constitutes a Baccalaureate Level Course”

November 7, 1986

Revised 4/10