



5. The Course Outline of Record

Overview

This section defines and explains the components and standards for the Course Outline of Record for all credit courses. Topics include:

- The Purpose of the Course Outline of Record
- Course Discipline Assignment
- Required Components of the Credit Course Outline of Record
- Standards for the Major Components of the Course Outline of Record

I. The Purpose of the Course Outline of Record

The Course Outline of Record (COR) is the primary course-level curriculum document in our college. It provides the template for course syllabi, offers the students, community, and other educational institutions information about our courses and programs, and plays an integral role in program evaluation and accreditation review. It is also the primary vehicle for individual programs and departments to outline the scope, rigor and direction of their curriculum.

The Course Outline of Record:

- Facilitates articulation with four-year schools.
- Provides faculty with a template indicating the objectives, content, evaluation standards, methods of instruction, and assignment types required in all sections of a given course and is used to develop individual syllabi.
- Provides data for the review and revision of course and program sequence, rigor, and scope during Program Evaluation and Planning.
- Documents academic standards in the Accreditation Review process.
- Serves as an educational contract between the students and Napa Valley College.

The following selection from the State Academic Senate Curriculum Committee provides further explanation:

Overview

The course outline of record plays a critical educational role on campus. It is the primary vehicle for course planning. When a course is revised or updated, it is the course outline that records the changes. As such, it forms the basis for a contract among the student, instructor, and institution identifying the expectations which will serve as the basis of the student's grade and giving the fundamental required components of the course which the student is guaranteed to receive from the instructor and institution. More than just specifying the required components of the course, the outline of record states the content and level of rigor for which students—across all sections of the course—will be held accountable. Courses are designed to provide a coherent body of knowledge to prepare students in a particular subject. The prerequisites students need to advance successfully through a series of such courses are based on information in the outline of record.

Function of the Course Outline of Record

As various instructors, both full- and part-time, teach our courses it is by reviewing the course outline that they may clearly identify the standards and content of the course they are to teach. In addition, the course outline plays a critical role in the on-going process of program review by which a college seeks to keep its curriculum relevant and to allocate its resources sufficiently to maintain its programs. When new programs are designed, it is through the selection of courses and construction of new course outlines that the program design is evaluated for its ability to meet the newly identified needs of students.

Certainly, the course outline should reflect the individual styles of the faculty originator and the college, and this paper is not intended to impose on the academic freedom of instructors to express that individuality. That said, it must be recognized that the purpose of the course outline goes beyond expressing the content of the course and the way it is taught. It is the document that is reviewed to meet accreditation requirements, intersegmental standards, and articulation needs. This broader audience outside the individual campus calls for expanded writing styles to meet the expectations of those groups. Experience has shown that certain methods of presentation are more effective than others in conveying the components of the course to meet those expectations. This paper represents the collective wisdom of the faculty of the California Community Colleges in good practices of writing course outlines.

Differences between Course Outlines of Record and Syllabi

The course outline of record should not be confused with the syllabus. While a course outline is a contract between the college and the student containing the requirements and components of the course, a syllabus describes how the individual instructor will carry out the terms of that contract through specific assignments. Syllabi give specific dates, grading standards, and other rules of the conduct of a course required by the individual instructor. A course outline gives the basic components of the course required to be taught by all instructors. A syllabus allows the individual instructor to include methods and topics which may go beyond the course outline. It gives the instructor the opportunity to bring out his or her particular talents and strengths.

(California State Academic Senate Curriculum Committee,
Stylistic Considerations in Writing Course Outlines of Record / Purposes of the Course Outline of Record
1999)

II. Course Double Coding

If a course covers material common to more than one subject area, it may be appropriate to list the course under both subjects, e.g. Social Psychology listed as both PSYC 123 / SOCI 123. This practice is referred to as double-coding. Courses proposed for double-coding must meet the following criteria for consideration by the Curriculum Committee:

1. The course must be recorded in two separate, but identical course outlines of record.
2. To ensure collaboration and agreement between departments on all proposed courses, faculty members from the proposed subject areas must author the COR for their area. Using the example above, this means that a Psychology faculty member will write and propose the PSYC 123 COR and a Sociology faculty member will write and propose the SOCI 123 COR. In cases where the subject-area faculty cannot agree to identical CORs, the Curriculum Committee Faculty Chair may be called upon to arbitrate the disagreement. If faculty authors are still unable to reach consensus after arbitration, the course will not be considered for double-coding.
3. Double-coded courses must also be cross-listed in both disciplines or designated as interdisciplinary.
 - a. Cross-listed Example: PSYC 123 ~ Social Psychology must list both Psychology and Sociology in section A.2. SOCI 123 must list both Sociology and Psychology in the same section. This enables faculty from either discipline to teach the course under both subject codes.

- b. Interdisciplinary Example: Both PSYC 123 and SOCI 123 ~ Social Psychology list the following in Section A2 of their CORs: “Interdisciplinary: Psychology and Sociology.” This requires faculty to meet minimum qualifications for both Psyc and Soci as described on the BOG Disciplines List under Interdisciplinary Studies.

III. Course Discipline Assignment

Each course reviewed and recommended for approval by the curriculum committee must be assigned to the appropriate discipline/s from the Board of Governors (BOG) Disciplines List, indicating that the minimum qualifications for service on the list provide appropriate academic or vocational training to teach the content of a particular course. This information is recorded in Section A2 on the Napa Valley College COR. While Title 5 does not specify that course disciplines be listed on the Course Outline of Record, this is the logical repository for discipline data as it allows review and approval of this assignment through the regular curriculum process and provides easy access to this information. The process of placing courses within disciplines is a local Academic Senate responsibility spelled out in Title 5 §53200.

Courses may be assigned to disciplines as follows:

- Single Discipline
- Cross-listed (Multiple Disciplines): Course content is common to all listed disciplines.
- Interdisciplinary: Course content requires preparation in two or more of the listed disciplines.

Courses assigned to more than one discipline or assigned as Interdisciplinary may be considered for double-coding as previously described. Double-coding cross-listed courses is not required. The Curriculum Committee will consider the professional judgment of the originating faculty author on this matter.

The following text, taken from the “COR: Curriculum Reference Guide” published by the ASCCC in 2008, clarifies the process and, further, recommends that discipline assignment be a stated duty of the curriculum committee as it is functionally related to other CC decisions.

Each course must be assigned by the curriculum committee to the appropriate discipline(s). This assignment helps describe the course by classifying it in a discipline (e.g., History 103 is clearly a history course and would be assigned to the History discipline) and also indicates what academic and occupational (if it is for a non-master's degree discipline) preparation is needed to teach the course. These disciplines are those that appear in Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in the California Community Colleges, also known as the "Disciplines List." Generally a course is assigned to a single discipline. However, some courses are cross-listed, i.e. placed in two or more disciplines. For example, a course on the Sociology of Aging may be appropriately assigned to both the disciplines of sociology and psychology, meaning a faculty member meeting the minimum qualifications of either discipline would be able to teach the course. Some courses can also be listed in the Interdisciplinary discipline, which is the combination of two or more disciplines---the faculty member must meet the minimum qualifications of one of the disciplines listed for that Interdisciplinary discipline and have preparation in each of the other disciplines listed for the Interdisciplinary discipline.

IV. Components of the Credit Course Outline of Record

The following section provides descriptions and standards for the major components of the Course Outline of Record (COR.) Detailed instructions for the full COR form are contained in the next chapter.

A. Required Components

Title 5, §55002(a)(3) requires that specific course information be contained in a Course Outline of Record.

Course Outline of Record. The course is described in a course outline of record which shall be maintained in the official college files and made available to each instructor. The course outline of record shall specify the unit value, scope, objectives, and content in terms of a specific body of knowledge. The course outline shall also specify types or provide examples of required reading and writing assignments, other assignments required outside of class, instructional methodology, and methods of evaluation for determining whether the stated objectives have been met by students.

This is true for all credit courses including degree-applicable, non-degree-applicable, and stand alone courses. The standards for Non-credit course CORs are covered in the chapter on Non-credit Course Forms.

In addition to the criteria specified in Title § 55002 (a)(3), the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges requires that the following additional information be contained on the Course Outline of Record for all Credit Courses:

- Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) code
- Course Identification Number
- Course Title
- Credit status
- Transfer status
- Basic skills status
- SAM code (occupational status)
- Course classification code (CB11 – required by SB361 and AB1943)
- Special class status (CB13 – for disabled students Title 5 §56029)
- Prior to college level (CB21 – English/ESL courses prior to college level)
- Funding agency category (CB23 – funding for course development was an Economic Development Grant)
- Program status (CB24 – stand alone or in a program, AB1943)

B. Course Repeatability Information

Some courses in the college curriculum may be repeated for credit up to three times provided that the Course Outline of Record contains a clear explanation for repeatability in section C1. Courses may be designated as repeatable under the following specific conditions described in Title 5 § 5504 :

§ 55041. Repeatable Courses.

(a) The district policy and procedures on course repetition adopted pursuant to section 55040 may designate as repeatable courses only those courses described in this section.

(b) If a district permits repetition of courses regardless of whether substandard academic work has been recorded, repetition shall be permitted, without petition, in instances when such repetition is necessary for a student to meet a legally mandated training requirement as a condition of continued paid or volunteer employment. Such courses must conform to all attendance accounting, course approval, and other requirements imposed by applicable provisions of law. Such courses may be repeated for credit any number of times. The governing board of a district may establish policies and procedures requiring students to certify or document that course repetition is necessary to complete legally mandated training pursuant to this subdivision.

(c) The district policy adopted pursuant to section 55040 may also designate courses of the types described in this subdivision as repeatable courses, subject to the following conditions:

(1) The district must identify the courses which are to be repeatable, and designate such courses in its catalog.

(2) The district must determine and certify that each identified course is one in which either:

(A) the course content differs each time it is offered; or

(B) the course is an activity course where the student meets course objectives by repeating a similar primary educational activity and the student gains an expanded educational experience each time the course is repeated for one of the following reasons:

(i) Skills or proficiencies are enhanced by supervised repetition and practice within class periods; or

(ii) Active participatory experience in individual study or group assignments is the basic means by which learning objectives are obtained.

(3) Activity courses which may qualify as repeatable courses meeting the requirements of paragraph (2)(B) of this subdivision include, but are not limited to the following:

(A) Physical education courses; or

(B) Visual or performing arts courses in music, fine arts, theater or dance.

(4) foreign language courses, ESL courses and nondegree-applicable basic skills courses are not considered "activity courses" for purposes of paragraph (2)(B) of this subdivision).

(5) The district must develop and implement a mechanism for the proper monitoring of such repetition.

(6) Students may repeat a course pursuant to this subdivision for not more than three semesters or five quarters. For purposes of this subdivision, semesters or quarters include summer or intersessions.

(7)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B) of this paragraph, where a college establishes several levels of courses which consist of similar educational activities, the repetition limitation in paragraph (6) of this subdivision applies to all levels of courses that involve a similar primary educational activity regardless of whether the repetitions reflect

multiple enrollments in a single course or in multiple courses involving the same primary activity.

(B) Visual or performing arts courses in music, fine arts, theater or dance which are part of a sequence of transfer courses are not subject to subparagraph (A) of this paragraph.

(d) When a course is repeated pursuant to this section, the grade received each time shall be included for purposes of calculating the student's grade point average.

C. Conditions on Enrollment

Courses with prerequisites, co-requisites, recommended preparations or any other limitations on enrollment are required to have a Form A attached to the COR explaining and documenting the data supporting the condition on enrollment. The following text from the State Academic Senate Handbook explains the regulatory and practical considerations for this form.

Standards

All courses with requisites and/or advisories must document those requisite skills which have been developed through content review in a separate section of the course outline. The primary goal of identifying requisites and providing advisories is to facilitate student success. So content review should document that pathway by showing how the skills achieved in the requisite course are fundamental to success for most students taking the "requiring" course. The writing style of the prerequisite skills section is the same as that for the objectives. The section usually begins with a phrase such as "Upon entering this course the student should be able to:" with a list of those entry skills following, expressed using active learning verbs following Bloom's taxonomy. In its simplest form a content review consists of comparing the entry skills list with the exiting skills of one or more courses to identify courses which would be appropriate requisites. This list of entry skills is also very useful in determining articulation pathways for students coming from other institutions or life experiences.

Justification of prerequisites requires documentation, and colleges have generally developed forms for the various types of evidence. This evidence can take many forms: equivalent prerequisites at UC and/or CSU, content review, legal codes mandating the requisite, or data collection and analysis. While these forms are not required to be part of the course outline, they are often attached as documentation of the process having been completed. Subdivision I.C.3, A, 2(a)vii of the Model District Policy on Requisites (CCCCO, 1993) strongly advises that districts "maintain documentation that the above steps were taken." A simple method for achieving this is to retain the content skills scrutiny documents for each requisite course.

Title 5 §55003(b) & (e) require requisites be based upon “data collected using sound research practices” for the skills of communication and computation when they are being required outside of those respective programs. This requirement does not affect the general requisite “content review” requirement for those programs specializing in communication and computation. An English course having a prerequisite of a lower level English course must validate this need through content review, but a business course requiring that same lower level English course is additionally required to base this need upon “data collected using sound research practices.”

Some common limitations on enrollment are: a requirement to pass a tryout prior to being enrolled in an athletic course or team, or physical requirement where the student’s safety would be compromised by an inability to meet specific physical capabilities. While the specific criteria of the limitation does not have to be in the course outline of record, such should be well defined and be as measurably objective as possible. So, a sight acuity limitation might include specific vision parameters and list any medical conditions that impose or exacerbate the limitation. If it is a tryout for athletics, the criteria should be very specific and realistic to the needs. So “be able to swim ten laps in a standard competition pool in under eight minutes” would be reasonable for a water polo tryout, but requiring this be done in less than one minute would be extreme.

Regulatory Requirements – Title 5

Prerequisites and Co-requisites §55002(a)2D

When the college and/or district curriculum committee determines, based on a review of the course outline of record, that a student would be highly unlikely to receive a satisfactory grade unless the student has knowledge or skills not taught in the course, then the course shall require prerequisites or co-requisites that are established, reviewed, and applied in accordance with the requirements of this article.

Title 5 provides the rules for requisites to be implemented and enforced in any credit courses, degree applicable or non-degree applicable, and specifically gives the determination for this need to the college curriculum committee. In integrating an outline, the objectives, content, learning materials, methods of instruction and evaluation should all reflect the need for the required entry skills. The relationship is one-way in that an objective may or may not have an entry requirement, but every entry requirement must be reflected by at least one of the objectives, content, learning materials, methods of instruction or methods of evaluation.

Basic Skills Requirements §55002(a)2E

If success in the course is dependent upon communication or computation skills, then the course shall require, consistent with the provisions of this article, as prerequisites or co-requisites eligibility for enrollment in associate degree credit courses in English and/or mathematics, respectively.

This standard mandates the requisites of communication and computation skills if the likelihood for success is dependent upon them. It sets the level at that which is required for eligibility into degree-applicable credit courses. This does not, however, eliminate the need for requisite validation as provided for in §55003 in the communication and computation areas.

D. Distance Education Status

Courses proposed for hybrid (50% and under) or Distance Education (51% or over) status, must undergo a separate approval process as outlined in Title 5 § 55206:

If any portion of the instruction in a proposed or existing course or course section is designed to be provided through distance education in lieu of face-to-face interaction between instructor and student, the course shall be separately reviewed and approved according to the district's adopted course approval procedures.

NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.

The NVC Curriculum Committee has accommodated the separate review regulation with the addition of an attachment to the COR; Form D ~ Distance Education. This form contains all requisite elements necessary to ensure that courses offered through distance education will meet the same academic and legal standards as courses delivered on-campus.

E. Writing and Review Standards for the Major Components

This section establishes the content and writing standards for the major components of the Course Outline of Record.

These elements of the COR express both the particulars of a given course and the broader instructional mission of the college. With this in mind, it is essential that faculty authors develop courses and programs consistent with the mission, values, institutional student learning outcomes, and the academic freedom policy of Napa Valley College. The Curriculum Committee will honor the discipline expertise of course authors and other discipline faculty by remaining open to multiple approaches and perspectives in all areas of curriculum development. Likewise, the committee will work collegially with faculty authors in all discussions of course content or pedagogy while ensuring the high quality and rigor of curricula at NVC.

Developing Inclusive Curricula

Where appropriate, faculty authors will provide specific evidence of how cultural diversity is addressed through course content, assignments, student learning outcomes, course assessments, or teaching methods. While the language and extent to which these elements are included in individual courses will vary to reflect theories and practices particular to each discipline, faculty authors are expected to develop inclusive curricula in a manner consistent with current and emerging scholarship in their field.

1. Course Description

The course description is a concise summary of the major topics covered in a course and should accurately reflect course content and objectives. Because they address a broad audience that includes students and the general public, they should be written in clear, accessible language and provide a well-rounded summary of the course. Additionally, they should indicate the following information where appropriate:

- Target audience: required for major, degree or certificate, transfer, etc. "Meets general education laboratory science requirement" for example.
- Prerequisites, co-requisites, and/or advisories.
- Indicate if the course is graded using Credit/No Credit grading, varies as to teaching method, or is repeatable.
- Course Repeatability.
- Course Sequence.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes are defined as the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of collegiate experiences (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, 2002). Student learning outcomes have the following characteristics:

- Represent culminating performances.
- Express an integration of knowledge/concepts/skills/abilities/attitudes.
- Describe performances that are essential.
- Refer to learning that transfers beyond the classroom.
- Stress the application of knowledge and skills.
- State clear expectation in terms students can understand.

- Have sufficient substance to drive decision about what students should learn.
- Are realistic and achievable within a reasonable time frame.
- Are verifiable/measurable using qualitative or quantitative methods.

3. Course Objectives

Course objectives define the skills and knowledge a student gains upon successful completion of a course and should integrate course content, methods of instruction, methods of assessment, and typical assignments. It is important to remember that all instructors who teach this course are contractually bound to fulfill the objectives as stated. With this in mind, we recommend that objectives be broad and introductory in scope rather than be so narrow or specific as to preclude individual instructors from interpreting the course according to their own expertise or the needs of the class.

Course Objectives:

- Contain more than five and fewer than 10 objectives for most three-unit courses.
- Broadly state the expectations for the course while adequately covering theory, principles, and concepts.
- Use skills and applications to reinforce and develop concepts, rather than adding concepts to supplement skills.
- Are expressed in measurable terms.
- Indicate higher-level performance, critical thinking and developmental complexity commensurate with a college-level course by utilizing course-level-appropriate critical thinking and performance verbs. Note that not ALL objectives need to reflect critical thinking. Recognizing, describing, and understanding are valuable skills. It should be clear, however, that higher thinking skills are an essential component of the course.

4. Course Content

Course content outlines the major concepts and topics of the course. When writing or reviewing content, keep in mind that the course outline of record will be the basis for all sections of the course, which may be taught by any discipline faculty. Consequently, this outline should focus on major topics of study that would be covered by any instructor teaching this course while providing enough detail to flesh out a full picture of the scope of the course. Remember that while all faculty are obligated to teach every point of content contained in this section of the COR, an individual instructor may go beyond this list in any given section of this course.

Course Content:

- Outlines the main topics and subtopics commonly included in a course, with enough detail to allow for consistency of instruction whenever new faculty are assigned to this course.
- Should be presented in outline format with major topics and sub-headings.
- Provides a detailed-enough list of content to give direction to a new instructor but leaves some room for individual instructors to interpret the subject matter according to their area of expertise.
- Adequately supports and reflects the course objectives.

5. Methods of Instruction

The Methods of Instruction section should provide a detailed description of all instructional methods that may be used in the course, drawing clear and specific connections between these methods and the course content. When considering the writing style of this section, keep in mind that the assignments and methods of instruction should support the stated objectives. In particular, because the learning experiences must either include critical thinking or experiences leading to this capability, the methods of instruction must effectively teach critical thinking appropriate to the nature and academic level of the course.

Methods of Instruction may include:

Lab, Demonstrations, Group discussion, Critique, Lecture, In-class student performances or reading, simulations, experiments, collaborative group work, project or portfolio presentations, multimedia presentations, guest lecturers, case study reviews, field trips, student presentations, or peer teaching and review.