

Curriculum Approval Primer

Step 1: Development and Departmental Review

Although AP 4020 grants both faculty and administrators the privilege of initiating new programs at CR, the responsibility of creating or revising curriculum is vested exclusively in the faculty. Local policy dictates that courses outlines of record must be updated at least once every five years (AP 4020/4022) and that

Faculty shall follow the course outline of record as the framework for the course, delivering the course content and meeting stated outcomes and objectives as determined by approved assessment criteria. Within this framework, each instructor shall use the outline in a manner best designed to meet the needs of students and to best suit the instructional methods of the faculty member. (AP 4020)

In short, even in its earliest stages, curriculum development should be a collaborative process since one faculty member's changes to a course outline of record can affect what is in essence a shared curriculum. Faculty should declare their intention to create or revise curriculum, informing their deans and directors as well as departmental colleagues and other faculty across the district who may have an interest in or might be impacted by changes to the curriculum in question. Additionally, in some instances, faculty should seek input from counselors or other Student Services personnel whenever proposed changes to courses or programs will impact students' capacity to complete degrees or certificates in a timely fashion.

Before a *new instructional program* (an area of emphasis, degree, or certificate of recognition or achievement) can enter the approval process, it must complete the program initiation requirements outlined in AP 4020. Except for brand-new programs (as well as community-education courses), all new and revised courses and program updates are processed through the curriculum review and approval system using eLumen.

Effective collaboration in curriculum development should not necessarily be limited to faculty working within the discipline. The statewide Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges (ASCCC) does recommend that

Instructional deans and CIOs should assist faculty in the curriculum development and review processes. These administrators are knowledgeable about compliance and resource requirements for courses and programs, and their early involvement in the process can prevent mistakes and delays later. Such expertise provides valuable and complementary guidance to the faculty content experts. (*Ensuring Effective Curriculum Approval Processes* 4).

In some instances, administrative involvement during the development phase will consist of deans or directors alerting faculty to five-year update deadlines or other mandated revisions stemming from developments such as changes to the course descriptors in the statewide Course Identification Numbering System (C-ID) or other external regulatory or accrediting agency requirements. Deans and directors may also provide crucial perspectives about resource requirements and feasibility regarding

class sizes and suitability for the District's instructional needs or alignment with the Education Master Plan.

Although faculty occasionally will be involved in creating or revising the Program Outline of Record for a degree or certificate in eLumen, most of the time folks will be working on updating the Course Outline of Record (COR). CORs are composite documents that contain Title 5 mandated elements, locally determined course content-related components, and various pieces of technical and academic information used for articulation purposes, Chancellor's Office submissions, and Student Services and database operations. Although all faculty should have at least a cursory awareness of the contents of the course outlines of record that apply to the courses they teach, setting down to create or revise a COR can be a daunting prospect.

Faculty desiring an in-depth orientation to course outlines of record should consult the ASCCC's 2017 paper "*The Course Outline of Record: A Curriculum Reference Guide Revisited*" and the linked document entitled "COR Example – 2021." Prior to CR's adoption of eLumen, the official COR was perhaps more easily perceived as a static document that it is now; for example, folks can refer to the curriculum archive to view older and inactive pdf version of the pre-eLumen CORs to see a more clearly distilled version of a course outline than might be readily visible while working within the curriculum management software. While the CORs that appear in the eLumen Curriculum Library or those that can be printed in a pdf format are in fact close approximations of CR's older versions, there are still a few details that might be translated more clearly into eLumen, so from time to time it might be useful to consult the archive when questions arise about how to interpret details on a COR in eLumen (for example, CR's convention regarding the listing of disciplines in a COR has always been to list all that apply in a given course, a detail that was pellucid on our older form and may be less clear in the eLumen version). According to the ASCCC, "A course outline of record needs to be integrated, as each element of the COR should reinforce the purpose of the other elements in the course outline" (5). In other words, components such as course objectives, methods of instruction, representative and required assessments, and learning outcomes such dovetail in a meaningful way to ensure a coherent experience for the student in the course. For example, if one considers how to integrate "learning outcomes" (an accreditation requirement) and "course objectives," the ASCCC notes that outcomes are what students should be able to do because of taking the course and objectives are the means and activities during the course through which students acquire the capacity to demonstrate those outcomes. Lastly, faculty should, according the ASCCC, keep in mind that

Irrespective of how the course outline is structured and written, the faculty member will generally produce a more robust product not by starting at one end and working towards the other but rather by being creative where doing so is most easy and enjoyable. (4)

Once departmental faculty have determined who the primary authors/contributors shall be, the process of developing the curriculum begins to take shape in eLumen. Since 2018, CR has used eLumen as its curriculum management system, and all courses and programs are created/modified by initiating "workflows" within the software (for detailed information about using eLumen please click on the appropriate links provided in this handbook). Faculty starting a workflow will appear as the primary author and can add additional contributors or co-authors as is necessary, and any such designated faculty will be capable of entering or changing content within the workflow. Each faculty member or department can determine their own approach to collaboration in the development phase; some may

prefer to work exclusively in eLumen, while others might wish to print and circulate printed pdf versions of the work in progress. Conceivably, folks could even go “old school” and meet or talk on the phone to share ideas. Please always remember that regardless of their preferred approach to collaboration, faculty authors should be mindful of only using the “save as draft” button until the development process is completed.

Step 2: One-week Campus Consultation phase

Once faculty authors and contributors have concluded the first step of creating or revising the course outline, they should click on the “submit” button to advance the proposal to the next step in the process. Following the submission of the draft in eLumen, the course proposal becomes available for district-wide feedback, so this is an appropriate time from faculty authors to email colleagues in larger departments or allied divisions to announce the availability for review of the proposal. Interested parties would be able to add comments on the proposal within the workflow in eLumen; alternatively, faculty might circulate printed pdf versions of the proposal and invite electronic feedback outside of eLumen.

Step 3: Dean or Director Review

After the campus consultation requirement has been met, the next step is for the area dean or director to review the proposal, which can sometimes take up to two weeks. Deans and directors have an important role in ensuring that appropriate consultation among faculty has occurred, that the various curriculum documents have been completed thoughtfully and accurately, and that the faculty receive any constructive feedback from the administrative perspective concerning such issues as class sizes, cross-listing, or fitness with the overall educational planning in the District. Curriculum development, review and approval at CR is faculty-driven, so it would be most accurate to describe the dean’s or director’s role at this juncture as one that confirms that a proposal is ready to move forward and placed on the agenda for formal technical and curriculum review. Timing-wise, proposals should be forwarded by a dean or director at least two weeks prior to desired meeting date for CC approval.

Step 4: Technical and Curriculum Committee review

After proposals are forwarded by a dean or director for formal review, The Curriculum Specialist assigns them to a particular meeting agenda. In most cases, proposals received two weeks in advance of the next CC meeting will be scheduled for review at that meeting; however, depending on the size of a given agenda, review of submissions may be postponed until there is adequate time for careful and appropriate feedback.

Technical and curriculum committee review is a two-week process that provides constructive critique and substantive feedback to faculty authors and allows for revision of documents prior to the public meeting and vote. Two weeks prior to the scheduled CC meeting, the Curriculum Specialist posts the proposal to the Curriculum Forum and then the CC members and technical review team have one week to post forum comments.

Technical review is facilitated by the Curriculum Specialist and solicits input about proposals from the Admissions and Records and Information Systems managers, the Scheduler, Transcript Evaluator, and Articulation Officer, with the primary goals of identifying and correcting errors, logistical issues, or barriers to completion and transfer. The Articulation Officer’s review is a critical component or technical

review. The results of technical review and any input concerning articulation are provided in the Curriculum Forum no later than 12 PM one week prior to the CC meeting.

Curriculum review is conducted by teams of CC members who each have a designated portion of the proposals under consideration. It is important to note that during this initial week of feedback in the Curriculum Forum, each item is reviewed and commented on by less than a quorum of the voting CC members. Generally, this means that each proposal will be reviewed by two voting members and the committee chair with the intention of helping faculty achieve the two primary goals articulated in AP 4020, namely

1. to maintain compliance with internal and external policies and
2. sustain academic excellence by ensuring that curricula are academically sound, comprehensive, and responsive to the needs of the institution and the community

The CC reviewers' feedback, like that of the technical review team, is also posted by 12 PM on the Friday directly preceding the CC meeting. At any point during this first week of review, faculty authors may post questions or follow-up comments to dialog with the respective review teams.

After the technical review and CC feedback has been recorded in the Curriculum Forum, the Curriculum Specialist then returns the proposals in eLumen to the faculty authors who will then be able to make the necessary changes to prepare for the final review and vote at the Curriculum Committee meeting. Once the faculty authors have revised/corrected the proposals in eLumen and resubmitted them for final review, they should also add a comment in the Curriculum Forum that addresses the feedback and indicates the additional work that was completed.

Step 5: Curriculum Committee Meeting and Vote

When the Curriculum Committee takes action on program and course proposals, it is in effect making a recommendation to the Academic Senate, which in turn considers those recommendations and decides whether or not they should be forwarded to the Board of Trustees for approval and adoption by the District. Not all items placed on an agenda warrant full review by the Curriculum Committee, and faculty can consult the document entitled "CHANGE TYPE – Curriculum, Articulation, & CC" for examples of COR elements that may only be listed as an "information item" or appear on the "consent calendar."

To clarify the purpose of Curriculum Committee meeting, one might highlight the PCAH requirement that colleges certify annually that all credit courses and programs approved by the Board of Trustees must be "compliant with California Education Code, California Code of Regulation, Title 5, and the current Chancellor's Office Program and Course Approval Handbook" (PCAH 23). One of the basic functions of the Curriculum Committee meeting, then, is to determine on behalf of the Academic Senate and Board of Trustees that the course and program proposals adhere to those regulatory and procedural requirements.

The PCAH also identifies the following five criteria for approval of credit and noncredit courses and programs: 1. Appropriateness to Mission; 2. Need; 3. Curriculum Standards; 4. Adequate Resources; 5. Compliance.

"Appropriateness to Mission," according to the PCAH refers primarily to the "mission of community colleges as established by the Legislature" (Ed Code, Section 66010.4), but the PCAH also states that

“programs and courses should also be congruent with the mission statement and master plan of the college and district” (PCAH 25).

“Need” can be “determined by multiple factors, such as the educational master plan of the college or district and accreditation standards,” current labor market information or career education regional consortia, and, of course, transferable and general education course work that will count toward a student’s completion of the bachelor’s degree.

Regarding “Curriculum Standards,” the PCAH is rather terse, but notably directs readers to Title 5 and to resources published by the ASCCC for further guidance about curriculum approval standards. Title 5, Section 55002: Standards and Criteria for Courses is the most detailed section in terms of specific guidance about those standards. Noteworthy ASCCC publications include *Ensuring Effective Curriculum Approval Processes: A Guide for Local Senates* (2016) and *The Course Outline of Record: A Curriculum Reference Guide Revisited* (2017).

Lastly, the PCAH admonishes colleges that they must have “resources to realistically maintain the program or course at the level of quality described in the proposal” and “the design of the program may not be in conflict with any state or federal laws, statutes or regulations” (PCAH 27-28).

These criteria indicate why the Curriculum Committee membership includes not only discipline faculty experts, but also a designated faculty member with current knowledge of Title 5 requirements governing Alternative Instructional Methodology, as well as the Curriculum Specialist, Articulation Officer, and key ex-officio members including the Chief Instructional Officer, Distance Education Administrator, and chair of the Assessment Committee.

Although the CC membership includes representation from each academic division as defined by the Academic Senate Constitution, the CC members do not serve first as representatives of their own disciplines as much as they are members of a committee charged with the following items listed its “major functions” according to the Academic Senate Bylaws:

1. To make recommendations to the Senate regarding additions, modifications, or deletions to the curriculum;
2. To maintain an on-going evaluation of the college curriculum;
3. To assist in the development and long-range planning of the overall educational program of the college; and
4. To advise faculty who are developing groupings of classes into cohorts or other linked units.
5. To act on the following proposals:
 - a. Creation, modification or deletion of programs, courses, or certificates;
 - b. Revision of a catalog description to reflect changes in the nature of a course;
 - c. Changes in hours and/or unites of a course;
 - d. Changes in the requirements of an existing certificate or degree program;
 - e. Changes in prerequisites, corequisites, and recommended preparation;
 - f. Assignment of courses to disciplines; and
 - g. Significant changes in the course outline related to grading standards, method of evaluation, or instructional materials.

In May 2022, the Academic Senate expanded the membership of the Curriculum Committee to include a student representative who may advise faculty and contribute to the dialog preceding the committee's vote.

Faculty authors, or their designated representative(s) if the authors have an immovable scheduling conflict, must attend the CC meeting if their item is listed on the agenda, along with other department members or their dean or director who may wish to discuss the proposal.

Step 6: Academic Senate Review and Vote

After each Curriculum Committee meeting has concluded, the Curriculum Specialist prepares a report on the actions taken by the CC to be forwarded, ultimately, to the Board of Trustees. That report is first sent to the Academic Senate and included on the next available Senate agenda to be presented by the faculty Curriculum Chair. Senators vote to support or reject the Curriculum Committee's recommendations prior to forwarding the approved curriculum for Board of Trustee adoption.

Step 7: Board of Trustees Review and Vote

At its monthly meeting, the Board of Trustees will review any curriculum recommendations that have been submitted by the Academic Senate. The Chief Instructional Officer, who is an ex-officio member of the Curriculum Committee, will address any questions the Board may have about the Senate's recommendations.

Step 8: Chancellor's Office Chaptering and Review

Once the Board of Trustee has adopted new or revised curriculum, most courses are automatically "approved" by the Chancellor's Office providing a control number for the course and allowing it to be "chaptered" in the Chancellor's Office Curriculum Inventory system (COCI). A few types of courses and programs are still subject to Chancellor's Office review (please consult the Curriculum Specialist for specific details about this), but in this era of "curriculum streamlining," colleges are granted the right to have most things automatically approved on the condition that they comply with all applicable regulations and standards.