

The Course Outline of Record (COR)

The Course Outline of Record (COR) is a document required for all courses which must fully describe the course and its components as well as meet standards detailed in Title 5, section 55002, as well as other regulatory and accreditation standards. It is the foundation of course development, providing basic course information and structure, and serves as a legal document used for articulation, accreditation, and Program Review purposes. CORs also document subject content, learning outcomes, and learning objectives for any faculty member who may teach the course, thus promoting continuity among course sections.

The COR must be detailed enough so that the Curriculum Committee and outside evaluators will be able to clearly understand its depth, scope, and performance expected from students. It must be detailed enough to guide any instructor planning to teach the course, but general enough so that instructors have the freedom to utilize their own teaching style and respond to student learning needs.

The course content (which includes lecture, lab, and TBA topics) listed in the COR must be covered by all faculty teaching the course, unless those topics are marked as optional or qualified with a statement such as “including but not limited to.” The course content does not prevent faculty from going beyond the topics in the COR, nor does it specify how the topics are taught or how much time is to be spent on each topic. The COR is intended to foster maximum pedagogical freedom cannot mandate points of view or teaching strategy.

A faculty member(s) who creates a COR does not “own” it, i.e. he/she/they do not have intellectual property rights or exclusive use of the document. In fact, since the District uses a shared curriculum management platform (CurricUNET), any COR can be “cloned” by faculty at another college.

The introduction to *The Course Outline of Record: A Curriculum Reference Guide*, (ASCCC, 2008) provides a useful overview of the importance of the COR:

The course outline has evolved considerably from its origins as a list of topics covered in a course. Today, the course outline of record is a document with defined legal standing and plays a central role in the curriculum of the California community colleges. The course outline has both internal and external influences.

Standards for the course outline of record appear in Title 5, in the Chancellor’s Office “Program and Course Approval Handbook,” and in the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) accreditation standards. System-wide intersegmental general education agreements with the California State University and the University of California (CSU-GE and IGETC) may also place requirements upon the course outline such as specific content or currency of learning materials.

Course outlines of record are also used as the basis for articulation agreements, providing a document with which to determine how community college courses will be counted upon transfer to baccalaureate granting institutions. Course outlines are reviewed as part of a college’s Program Review process, a process of central importance to accrediting agencies. For colleges to maintain their delegated authority to review and approve new and revised courses, they must certify that their local approval standards meet the comprehensive guidelines produced by the Chancellor’s Office. The quality described in a course outline of

record is evidence of meeting these guidelines.

The course outline of record plays a particularly important role in the California community colleges because it clearly lays out the expected content and learning objectives for a course for use by any faculty member who teaches the course. Course outlines provide a type of quality control since it is not uncommon for community college courses to be taught by several, and sometimes dozens, of faculty members. In order to ensure that core components are covered in all sections of a course, the California Community College System relies on the course outline of record to specify those elements that will be covered by all faculty who teach the course.

Purpose of the Course Outline

- Serves as the foundation for course planning and development, providing basic course information and structure.
- Serves as the basis for transfer articulation agreements with individual CSU and UC campuses. They are the basis for evaluating the transferability of courses and their equivalence to courses offered at four-year schools.
- Meets accreditation requirements.
- Plays a critical role in Program Review, the process for allocating resources and keeping our curriculum relevant and current.

Standards for the Course Outline, Academic Rigor, and Critical Thinking

- Standards for course outlines appear in Title 5, the PCAH, in intersegmental GE agreements with the CSU and UC systems, and in accreditation standards.
- Course outlines must show evidence of the required degree of academic rigor as specified in Title 5. For degree-applicable credit courses, the key required components are:

Grading Policy 55002(a)2A: The grade is based on demonstrated proficiency in subject matter and the ability to demonstrate that proficiency, at least in part, by means of essays, or, in courses where the curriculum committee deems them to be appropriate, by problem solving exercises or skills demonstrations by students.

Intensity 55002(a)2C: The course treats subject matter with a scope and intensity that requires students to study independently outside of class time.

Difficulty 55002(a)2F: The course work calls for critical thinking and the understanding and application of concepts determined by the curriculum committee to be at college level.

Level 55002(a)2G: The course requires learning skills and a vocabulary that the curriculum committee deems appropriate for a college course.

- The incorporation of critical thinking must be evident throughout the course outline but especially in the SLOs, Course Content, Instructional Methods, Representative Assignments, and Methods of Evaluation. It must be clear that students are *expected* to

think critically (SLOs), *instructed* in how to do so (Instructional Methods), asked to *practice* critical thinking in outside assignments (Representative Assignments), and are held *accountable* for their performance (Methods of Evaluation).

- The COR is a document with defined legal standing and forms the basis for a contract among the student, instructor and institution which specifies the components of the course which students are guaranteed to receive, as well as the content and level of rigor for which students will be held accountable.

Course Outline vs. Syllabus

- It is important to distinguish between a course outline and a syllabus. A course outline gives the basic components of the course required to be taught by all instructors; whereas a syllabus describes how an individual instructor will teach that course in terms of specific assignments, dates, grading standards, and other rules of conduct required by that instructor. A syllabus can include methods and topics which go beyond the course outline, keeping in mind that all content in the COR must be taught by all who teach the course.
- Whereas a syllabus provides policies and information pertaining to a course as taught by a specific instructor during a specific semester, a COR is a comprehensive document that describes the course from a global perspective, providing the basic components of the course required to be taught by all faculty who may teach the course at any given time.
- When faculty write syllabi for courses, they should consult department or division guidelines, as well as the *Skyline College Syllabus Checklist*, which can be found in the faculty handbook and in the Appendix to this document.

Writing an Integrated Course Outline

- The goal is to write an **integrated** course outline, which means that the course content, methods of instruction and evaluation, and assignments work together and lead to the achievement of the course learning outcomes. The COR is considered integrated and harmonious when each element of the course outline reinforces the other elements.
- Directions for writing the COR (explained by each CurricUNET screen) can be found at the Skyline [*Guidelines for Writing the Course Outline of Record*](#).
- A model COR can be found in Appendix B of this Handbook.

Inter-campus Communication and Consultation Process

An important preliminary aspect of creating a new course and/or program at Skyline is doing a search on CurricUNET to learn whether or not a similar or equivalent course/program already exists at CSM or Cañada. If so, the faculty originator and Dean will inform the faculty and Dean(s) in the pertinent discipline(s) at our sister college(s) that Skyline is in the process of creating new curriculum. This inter-campus communication is designed to keep faculty at all three campuses informed about curriculum development and allow for feedback.