

Sierra College

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

AP 4020

Program and Curriculum Development

Date Adopted: 3/9/2004

Date Revised: 10/10/2025

Date Reviewed: 10/10/2025

References: Title 5 Sections 51021, 55000 et seq., and 55100 et seq.; 34 Code of Federal Regulations Part 600.2; ACCJC Accreditation Standard 2; U.S. Department of Education regulations on the Integrity of Federal Student Financial Aid Programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended

Curriculum and program development are academic and professional matters which are initiated by faculty within the department and submitted through the appropriate approval process established by the Curriculum Committee, under the jurisdiction of the Academic Senate. The Vice President, Office of Instruction provides the administrative oversight for the process.

These committees apply the following evaluative criteria to each new course or program as well as to substantial changes in existing programs.

Appropriateness to Mission of the California Community Colleges (See California State Education Code)

- Is the course or program designed to be taught to lower division students for credit towards the degree, and/or for purposes of transfer, occupational preparation, or career supplementation or upgrade?
- Does the course or program develop the ability of students to succeed in college level courses and adult noncredit instruction?
- Does the course or program provide systematic instruction in a body of content or skills whose mastery forms the basis of the student grade?
- Is the course designed to assist in the economic development of local businesses or the community?

Need

- Is there a demonstrable need for a course or program that meets the stated goals and objectives, at this time, and in the region the college proposes to serve with the program?
- The proposed new program would not cause harmful competition with any existing program at another college.

- For transfer courses or programs, is there student demand and is there transfer applicability (i.e., the course substantially satisfies the lower division course requirements for the corresponding four-year institution major or is articulated to meet transfer general education requirements)?
- For occupational and career technical courses or programs, is there a documented labor market need based on employer input or a job market analysis?

Quality

The courses and programs meet the standards set by Title 5 for each category of credit offered—degree credit, non-degree credit, and noncredit.

Feasibility

Does the college have the resources to maintain the course or program in which the course is required at the level of quality described in Course Outline of Record and the new program application?

Compliance

Does the course or program comply with all other laws applicable to it, including federal regulations, licensing requirements, and the particular legal requirements for courses explained in the Chancellor's Office *Program and Course Approval Handbook*?

The District shall develop and offer programs and curricula in ethnic studies, programs and curricula that infuse a global perspective into the curricular offerings, and programs and curricula that include instruction on the perspectives of persons with low socioeconomic status in the topic.

CURRICULUM APPROVAL PROCESS

The Curriculum Committee is responsible for the oversight of the curriculum approval processes. The stages for initiation, review, approval, and evaluation are published in the Sierra College Curriculum Handbook which is a publication of the policies determined by the Curriculum Committee and approved by the Academic Senate.

All approved courses are entered as official in the District database systems. The official database of approved courses is maintained by the Office of Instruction.

The Curriculum Committee submits reports of its actions and policies to the Academic Senate. In addition, they submit all actions to the Board of Trustees for review and approval.

Non-credit courses are submitted to the Chancellor's Office for stand-alone approval.

Courses are published in the online Sierra College catalog and online schedules. Any modifications to approved courses are submitted through the curriculum approval process.

The Curriculum Committee is also responsible for establishing timelines and limits for the process. Those are noted in the current edition of the college's Curriculum Handbook.

PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESS

The Curriculum Committee is also responsible for the oversight of the program and certificate approval processes. Degree and certificate programs are examined using the same evaluative criteria as the curriculum process.

Programs include:

Associate Degrees (require 18 semester units or more in the major and general education)

Certificates of Achievement (typically require 16 units or more)

Skills Certificates (always less than 16 units)

Reports of these actions and policies are also submitted to the Academic Senate. In addition, they submit all program and course actions to the Board of Trustees for review and approval.

All new Associate Degree programs, Certificates of Achievement programs and existing approved programs with substantial modifications are sent on to the Chancellor's Office for approval.

Once approved by the Chancellor's Office, the program is added to the inventory of approved programs and entered as official in the District database systems. Skills Certificates are locally approved. All approved programs are published in the Sierra College catalog.

The Curriculum Committee is also responsible for establishing timelines and limits for the process. Those are noted in the current edition of the College's Curriculum Handbook.

The District shall provide annual certification to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office pertaining to the approval of credit courses and credit programs as required under Title 5 Sections 55100 and 55130.

CREDIT HOUR

One credit hour of community college work (one unit of credit) shall require a minimum of 48 semester hours of total student work or 33 quarter hours of total student work, which may include inside and/or outside-of-class hours. A course requiring 96 hours or more total student work shall provide at least 2 units of credit. Cooperative work experience courses shall adhere to the formula for credit hour calculations identified in Title 5 Section 55256.35. Direct assessment competency-based education modules shall adhere to the formula for credit hour calculations identified in Title 5 Section 55270. Credit for clock hour designated programs shall be awarded consistent with 34 Code of Federal Regulations Part 600.2

For purposes of federal financial aid eligibility, a "credit hour" shall be not less than:

- One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks for one semester hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time;
or
- At least an equivalent amount of work as required in the paragraph above, of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work,

internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

See Board Policy 4020 and Administrative Procedure 4021.