

THE COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD

This section of Curriculum Basics addresses the role of the course outline and summarize the basic requirements as set forth in Title 5, the Curriculum Standards Handbook, CSU/GE and IGETC requirements, and WASC accreditation standards.

The text in this section is taken from “Components of a Model Course Outline of Record,” Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges, 11/95
http://www.academicssenate.cc.ca.us/Publications/Papers/Model_outline.htm

“The course outline of record plays a central role in the curriculum of the California Community Colleges. Standards for the course outline appear in Title 5, in the Curriculum Standards Handbook, in accreditation standards, in intersegmental general education agreements with the California State University and the University of California (IGETC and CSU-GE), and serve as the basis for transfer articulation agreements with individual CSU and UC campuses.”

“The course outline has evolved considerably from the list of topics covered which an instructor would share with students in the class. It is now **a document with defined legal standing** which is read by many more eyes than just those of instructor and student.”

The Role of the Course Outline of Record

There are several functions that the Course Outline of Record (COR) performs on the community college campus.

- (1) **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 course 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. Maintaining academic standards means providing consistent, quality instruction in the classroom. As our courses are taught by various instructors, both full- and part-time, it is by reviewing the course outline that they may clearly identify the standards and content of the course they are to teach.”

- (2) **Program Review and Development** – “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.”
- (3) **Evidence of Rigor** – “Another role of the course outline is to demonstrate that all of the **required components** are present in the course to the required degree of rigor as specified in Title 5 and the Curriculum Standards Handbook. It is the responsibility of the college curriculum committee to review course outlines submitted by discipline faculty to assure that they meet these standards. Such **course approval** is the central task of the curriculum committee. ... When questions arise as to the appropriateness of a college’s course or program offerings, the Chancellor’s Office or CPEC may request copies of the pertinent course outlines for review. If these reviews and approvals are not satisfactory, the colleges may not offer the programs and/or courses.”
- (4) **Prerequisite Documentation** – “Title 5 regulations in the area of matriculation allow the establishment and enforcement of **prerequisites**, but only when students would be highly unlikely to succeed without them. In some cases those prerequisite skills must be documented in the course outline of record. The process that the college uses is included in its annual Matriculation Plan and is part of the documentation provided for site visits by the Chancellor’s Office.”
- (5) **Articulation with Colleges and Universities** – “Outlines of record are also submitted annually for approval as meeting California State University General Education (**CSU/GE**) breadth requirements and for inclusion in the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (**IGETC**). Each college also establishes Transfer Articulation Agreements with surrounding four-year colleges and universities.” (Course outlines must also be submitted to the UC to be included on the UC’s Transfer Course Approval list.) “Again, the course outline serves as the basis for evaluation of the transferability of these courses and to substantiate their equivalence to those courses offered at the four-year schools.”

(6) **Accreditation** – “Each college maintains its accreditation through reviews conducted by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (**WASC**). In the self-study done in preparation for such reviews – and during the site visits which accompany them – course outlines of record serve as documentation of the college’s high academic standards and quality certificate and degree programs. In the current move toward increased accountability, many other outside agencies have begun to look at the course outline of record – its quality and rigor – as a means of evaluating institutional effectiveness.”

Note: The Course Outline of Record is NOT the same as 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.”

Basic Requirements for the Integrated Course Outline of Record for Degree Credit Courses

What follows is a guideline for writing areas of the COR for degree credit courses. It is intended to address the needs specified by the various external bodies that will review the courses (as listed above). It is important to integrate all components throughout the outline:

Objectives meet the stated needs of the course.

Course Content covers all the objectives.

Methods of Instruction are identified with particular course objectives.

Assignments and Evaluation clearly show how students attain all objectives.

Texts are of college level and cover the theory and principles of the subject.

Pay particular attention to critical thinking.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Write a short paragraph as a well-developed overview of topics covered. ➤ Include evidence of need, i.e., CSU transfer or other need. ➤ List prerequisites, corequisites and/or advisories. ➤ Include lecture/lab/studio hours and units and grading options.
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OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ State in measurable terms what students will be able to do; use action verbs. ➤ Establish that critical thinking is an integral part of the course. (Rather than “list” or “describe,” use “analyze” or “compare and contrast.”) ➤ Be concise but complete.
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PREREQUISITES OR ADVISORIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ For pre- and co-requisites list entry skills without which student success is highly unlikely. (separate form) ➤ For advisories list entry skills which would broaden or enhance student learning but without which the student would still succeed.
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COURSE CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Compile a complete list of all topics taught in the course. ➤ Arrange the list by topic with sub-headings.
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METHODS OF INSTRUCTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ State methods that are specifically related to the course objectives. ➤ Methods should provide guidance to instructors in designing their class sessions.
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ASSIGNMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Give assignments that reflect coverage of all objectives and content. ➤ Descriptions of the types or examples of assignments are required. (Be specific enough to provide real guidance to faculty.) ➤ The nature of the assignments must clearly demand critical thinking. ➤ Appropriate out-of-class work is required for credit courses.
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METHODS OF EVALUATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Relate to the stated objectives of the course.➤ Clearly show that critical thinking skills are required.➤ Note: Grading is based, at least in part, by means of essays, or, when appropriate, by skills demonstrations or problem-solving exercises.
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TEXTBOOKS/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ List specific title, author, publisher.➤ Specify date of publication.
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