

NUMBER: ACAF 2.03
SECTION: Academic Affairs
SUBJECT: Creation and Revision of Academic Courses
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Policy for: All Campuses
Procedure for: Columbia and Regional Campuses
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I. Policy

Academic courses form the foundation of the University of South Carolina's graduate and undergraduate curriculum. Courses are taught throughout the University at a range of levels and can be either credit bearing or noncredit bearing. This policy applies to credit bearing courses only. Noncredit bearing courses are governed by University Policy ACAF 1.71 Noncredit Certificate Programs.

Course actions on all campuses including the creation, revision and elimination of graduate and undergraduate courses must be approved at appropriate levels of curriculum responsibility within the University as outlined in this policy prior to advertisement or insertion into the *Graduate* and *Undergraduate Bulletins*.

A. Course Creation and Revision: Responsibility and Oversight

1. Faculty Oversight

The faculty of the University has legislative authority over matters pertaining to the curriculum on the campus where they serve. Faculty governance bodies on each campus shall review all requests to create, revise, or eliminate graduate and undergraduate courses to ensure that all offerings meet the academic expectations of the University. Course actions should also be reviewed to ensure that courses are not unnecessarily duplicated within each campus and are appropriate to the department requesting the course.

2. Campus and Unit Oversight

The deans of the colleges and schools on the Columbia campus, the campus deans on the Regional campuses, and the chief academic affairs officers on the Senior campuses are responsible for implementing this policy and maintaining unit- and campus-level compliance with CHE and SACS regulations.

Within units, program leadership is responsible for ensuring that programs meet the academic expectations of the University and are assessed annually, including monitoring program offerings using specific delivery methods and/or locations.

3. Academic Program Liaisons (APL)

An Academic Program Liaison (APL) will be designated for each college/school on the Columbia campus, for each Senior campus, and for the Regional campuses. The APLs will serve as the main information resource on academic program actions and as the academic program liaison to the Provost's Office for their respective units. The list of current Academic Program Liaisons can be found at www.sc.edu/provost/acadprog.

B. Course Action Approval Process

1. Initiation of Program Actions

In most cases, course actions will begin in a department or unit of a campus, college or school. After consultation with the APL and unit-level approval, course actions must be approved by the campus, college or school faculty governance bodies as appropriate.

2. Columbia Campus Review Process

- a. New or revised courses must first be approved by the appropriate departmental and college-level curriculum committees.
- b. If course actions impact the curriculum of P-12 educator preparation programs, the requesting department must secure the concurrence of the Dean of the College of Education.
- c. If course actions impact the curriculum offerings at the Regional campuses, the requesting department must notify the Office of System Affairs.
- d. Course actions for undergraduate courses must then be reviewed and approved by the Curriculum and Courses Committee of the Faculty Senate, and approved by the full Faculty Senate. If course actions affect existing offerings on the Regional campuses, the Regional campus representative on the Curriculum and Courses Committee is responsible for notifying the Office of System Affairs, who then will coordinate feedback from the relevant Regional campus bodies.
- e. Course actions for graduate courses must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate curriculum committee of the Graduate Council, and then approved by the full Graduate Council.

- f. Professional degree course actions are approved in the respective professional college/school curriculum committee, and if part of a broader curriculum change, by the faculty of the professional college/school.
 - g. Once the appropriate faculty governance structure has given its approval, the Faculty Senate/Graduate Council should submit the approved course addition, deletion or revision to the University Registrar's Office for bulletin entry. Units are responsible for verifying the accuracy of the approved action.
3. Senior Campus Review Process
- a. New or revised courses must first be approved by the appropriate departmental and campus-level curriculum committees or equivalent decision making structures.
 - b. Course actions for undergraduate courses must then be reviewed and approved by the appropriate faculty governance body.
 - c. Course actions for graduate courses must be reviewed and approved by the full campus-level Graduate Council or equivalent body.
 - d. If course actions impact the curriculum offerings at the Regional campuses, the Senior campus Registrar's office must notify the Office of System Affairs.
 - e. Once the appropriate faculty governance structure has given their approval, the requesting department should submit the approved course addition, deletion or revision to the USC-Columbia Registrar's Office, for bulletin entry and coding as needed.
4. Regional Campus Review Process (RCAM courses only)
- a. New or revised courses must first be approved by the appropriate campus faculty.
 - b. Course actions must then be reviewed and approved by the Regional Campuses Faculty Senate (RCFS).
 - c. Once the RCFS has given its approval, the RCFS designee should submit the approved course addition, deletion or revision to the University Registrar's Office in Columbia for bulletin entry. Units are responsible for verifying the accuracy of the approved action.

C. Definitions

1. Course levels

- a. Lower Division Undergraduate Courses (100-200 level courses): Typically, lower division or introductory courses are taken during the freshman and sophomore year.
- b. Upper Division Undergraduate Courses (300-400 level courses): Typically are upper division undergraduate courses.
- c. Advanced Undergraduate/Entry Level Graduate Courses (500-600 level courses): These may be taken by advanced undergraduates or graduate students unless prohibited by specific campus regulations. Course syllabi must have clearly distinguished requirements for undergraduate credit and graduate credit. Graduate students are expected to perform at a higher level with additional graduate level requirements.
- d. Graduate Courses (700 level and above): These are graduate level courses. Undergraduate students may not enroll in these courses. Courses at this level may not be taught in the same classroom as those at a lower level, e.g. 400/700 courses.
- e. Professional Degree Courses: These are courses required as part of the professional degree curriculum taught in the professional schools. Only students who have been admitted into the professional school may enroll in these courses.

2. Course Components

- a. Standard and Non-Standard Sessions
 - i. Contact Hours: Each single course credit requires a minimum of 700 minutes or 14 hours of continuous and ongoing instructional time. Additionally, a minimum of five consecutive calendar days of continuous instruction is required per credit. This time excludes breaks and final exams.

A minimum of three weeks of continuous instruction is required for a three credit course.
 - ii. Standard academic year course sessions average 14 weeks in length. Summer I and Summer II sessions are each five weeks in duration.

- iii. Any variation from the above is considered a Non-Standard Session and must be approved each semester by the department chair of the offering unit, the campus/college/school dean in consultation with the Registrar of the appropriate campus.

These regulations apply regardless of course level.

- b. Course Prefixes

Prefixes are values added to the beginning of course acronyms which help identify the campus or unit providing instruction.

- c. Course Suffixes

Suffixes are values added to the end of course acronyms which help identify either a type of course, or a special topics course.

- d. Credit

- i. Fixed and Variable Credit Courses: When a course is created, it is identified as either a fixed credit course or a variable credit course. Credit courses may possibly be taken more than once, until the maximum number of credit hours has been earned, as defined in the appropriate Bulletin.

- ii. Zero Credit Courses: On rare occasions, a course may be listed as a zero credit course. The creation of zero credit courses is only permitted under exceptional circumstances. Once a student has taken a variable credit course for zero credit, s/he cannot subsequently enroll in the course for more than zero credit.

- e. Delivery Method

Academic programs and courses are identified based upon the delivery method(s) used to satisfy the total number of required credit hours.

- i. Traditional Instruction: Courses offered in a traditional classroom setting in which the instructor is face-to-face in the same room at the same time as the students.

- ii. Distance Technology Instruction: Courses offered using synchronous or asynchronous distance technology as a primary delivery method. Examples of distance education methods include web-based instruction, live video streaming instruction, and/or CD-DVD instruction.

iii. Blended Method of Instruction: Courses may be considered “blended” if more than one method of delivery is used.

f. Delivery Location

Academic programs and courses are also identified based upon the delivery location(s) or site used to offer the total number of required credit hours.

i. On-campus: Courses offered on the geographic site of the home campus.

ii. Off-campus: Courses offered at locations geographically apart from the home campus. Internships and practical learning courses are not considered off-campus courses.

iii. Blended Location of Instruction: Courses may be considered “blended” if more than one delivery location is used.

g. Instructor

The instructor for a course must present the course instructional materials and oversee all course assessments. The instructor must provide the largest single share of the contact hours of instruction associated with the course. The instructor is the final arbiter of grades assigned for the course.

Faculty members teaching courses must be approved by the academic dean and academic unit hosting the course. For Regional campus faculty, the approving unit is the Columbia or Senior campus department or college/school.

Faculty members must have the required credentials and meet the SACS criteria for teaching at the appropriate level. If multiple instructors are used, each faculty member must meet the above criteria. Once a faculty member is approved and added to the appropriate faculty roster, the faculty member will remain on the roster for that specific course only, until removed.

D. Course Syllabi

All undergraduate and graduate courses must have a course syllabus that includes the following:

1. Course title (including department designator and number)
2. Course objectives expressed as learning outcomes

3. Required text(s) and/or suggested readings
4. Course Requirements and Grading
 - a. Assignments and/or exams with brief descriptions of expectations and values for each.
 - b. Grading scheme and weights including what a student must do to receive a grade of A to F.
 - c. Syllabi for courses at the 500 or 600 levels must contain an explanation of the differences in requirements for graduate and undergraduate credit. Graduate students should be required to complete additional graduate level work (e.g., a research paper and/or substantive additional reading), and should be evaluated on a more rigorous basis than undergraduate students.
 - d. Topical outline of content to be covered
 - e. A time allocation framework (e.g., week 1, week 2, etc. to include at least 14 weeks for a standard academic year course session)
 - f. All distance education courses must include a statement about the estimated instructional time commitments for students. For example, the syllabus could state that students will spend approximately 150 minutes of instructional time during the 14 week session using Blackboard or other web technologies.

E. Course Development Guidelines: Additional Approvals

New or revised graduate and undergraduate courses must be approved by the appropriate campus faculty governance bodies as required by campus-specific procedures.

As outlined below, additional levels of approval, monitoring and/or assessment are required for distance education, contract, special topic, experimental, off-campus, schedule exception, non-standard session, independent study, internship, practical learning and professional development courses.

1. Distance Education Courses

During course data entry for the Master Schedule each semester, care should be taken to ensure that the correct Method of Instruction code is entered for each course delivered using distance education technology. Each course section should reflect the actual delivery method being used.

The current list of USC Columbia courses approved to be delivered by distance education can be found at www.sc.edu/provost/acadprog.

a. Change in Delivery Method

On the Columbia and Regional campuses, requests to change the method of delivery for a course from traditional instruction to distance technology instruction must be approved by the appropriate faculty governance body.

Requests must include an explanation of and a justification for the distance education technology chosen, a schedule of meeting dates/course modules and the estimated instructional time commitments required of each, a list of provisions made for student-professor and student-student interaction, and documentation addressing course authorship and copyright concerns.

Once a course has been initially approved for offering via a particular method of distance delivery, approval is not required each subsequent time the course is scheduled.

b. Required Assessment and Reporting of Impact of Distance Education Courses on Academic Program Delivery

All units must maintain a list of approved distance education courses including the date(s) of approval, effective semester(s) and the delivery method(s) approved. Units must also regularly assess the percentage of credits which are available in an academic program through distance technology instruction. The provost or chief academic affairs officer will request this information periodically each year.

If 25 to 49 percent of the credits toward a program can be obtained using distance technology instruction, SACS must be notified prior to the program offering. If 50 percent or more of the credits toward an academic program can be obtained using distance technology instruction, approval is required from both CHE and SACS six months prior to the program offering. For more information, see University Policy ACAF 2.00 Creation and Revision of Academic Programs.

3. Contract Courses

Contract courses are courses offered to a group or cohort of students where a third party is paying the tuition. This includes all courses where grants are paying student tuition and fees. Agreements for contract courses may be between USC and an outside agency or a USC academic unit and a USC funded project.

a. Types of Contract Courses

i. Regular Rate Courses

Regular rate courses are courses offered at the normal Board-approved contract tuition rate to a cohort of students.

ii. Reduced Rate Courses

Reduced rate courses are courses offered at a tuition rate less than the regular Board approved rate including the Board approved certified teacher rate. No more than 6 hours of reduced rate courses (except for those courses identified as dual enrollment in the contract flag field) can apply to a graduate student's program of study.

iii. Dual Enrollment Courses

Dual enrollment courses are University of South Carolina courses that are offered to eligible high school students via a contractual arrangement between the University and their school or school districts. Students enrolled in these courses earn simultaneous credit towards graduation from high school and academic credit toward either an associate or baccalaureate degree program.

All Columbia and Regional campus dual enrollment courses must be submitted for processing by the Office of System Affairs. Senior campus dual enrollment courses are processed by the respective campus chief academic affairs office. See also University Policy ACAF 2.04 Dual Enrollment Courses.

b. Office of Educational Outreach (OEO)

The Office of Educational Outreach (OEO) in the College of Education is responsible for all regular and reduced rate contract courses in all disciplines of colleges/schools on the Columbia and Regional campuses. Contract courses offered by these campuses must be reviewed and approved by OEO to ensure that they meet all USC and state requirements. Detailed instructions regarding the development of a new contract course or the scheduling of a course in support of an existing degree program contract can be found at <http://www.ed.sc.edu/o eo>.

4. Special Topics and Experimental Courses

Special Topics courses are courses that have variable content, title and course number suffixes and may be taken multiple times. Experimental courses are

considered to be a type of Special Topics course and should be processed in the same manner as other Special Topics courses.

a. Special Topics Course Development and Scheduling

- i. Proposals from offering units to create a new Special Topics course should include a specific description of how many times the Special Topics course may be taken by an individual student, and how credit is to be assigned.
- ii. Following initial approval, the offering unit must notify the Office of the Registrar each time the course is offered (including the first time). The course title, suffix and description information must be filed with the Office of the Registrar for cataloging prior to course data entry for the Master Schedule each semester. Graduate course information should be forwarded to the Graduate School as well as the Office of the Registrar.

The course title that appears on the student's transcript each time the course is taken will vary according to the approved course content for that semester.

b. Special Topics Course Suffixes

On the Columbia and Regional campuses, any letter may be used for a Special Topics course suffix except "L," which is reserved for laboratory courses, "M," which is reserved for May Session courses, and "X," which is reserved for Experimental courses.

If the same Special Topics course title is used in later semesters, it is good practice to use the same letter suffix again for that title. The same suffix should not be used for two different titles in the same academic year.

The approved course title and suffix are only valid for one semester at a time.

5. Off-campus Courses

Requests seeking approval for course offerings off-campus or seeking to add or change course offering locations should outline the schedule of meeting dates and times including a calculation of contact minutes. If the delivery location of a course is determined in a Memorandum of Agreement between the University of South Carolina and another entity, a copy of the MoA must be included with the request.

Requests must be approved by the Provost's Office or the chief academic affairs officer as appropriate.

a. Required Assessment and Reporting of Impact of Off-Campus Courses on Academic Program Delivery

All units must maintain a list of approved off-campus courses including the date(s) of approval, effective semester(s) and the approved delivery location(s). Units must also regularly assess the percentage of credits which are available in an academic program at an off-campus or separate geographic location. The provost or chief academic affairs officer will request this information periodically each year.

If between 25 percent and 49 percent of the credits toward a program can be obtained at an off-campus site, CHE and SACS must be notified prior to the program offering. If 50 percent or more of the credits toward a program can be obtained at an off-campus site, approval is required from CHE and SACS six months prior to the program offering. For more information, see University Policy ACAF 2.00 Creation and Revision of Academic Programs.

6. Schedule Exceptions and Non-Standard Session Courses

Requests for schedule exceptions and non-standard session courses must be approved by the offering unit's department chair when applicable, the academic dean and the Office of the Registrar.

Schedule exceptions will be granted for justifiable reasons only. Schedule exceptions may be warranted if a course has an irregular or abbreviated meeting schedule, if the course meets over a period longer than the regular term, or if the course has a beginning and/or ending date different from the regular term.

Non-standard session and schedule exception approval is only valid for one semester.

7. Independent Study Courses

Independent study courses allow students to pursue an area of academic interest not adequately covered by the regular course structure. Campus/college/school policies generally govern independent study practices, such as the limits placed on the amount of independent study credit that may count toward a degree. Both undergraduate and graduate students must complete independent study contracts to register for the courses.

8. Internships and Practical Learning Courses

Internships and practical learning courses are courses in which students meet program-specific learning outcomes and course objectives in an applied environment. They are offered for a range of credits, and include a formal mechanism for evaluating the achievement of objectives.

9. Professional Development Courses

Professional development (PD) courses are primarily courses intended to address a specific professional development need, and that are not regular program offerings. Typically offered in the College of Education, they will under limited conditions count as graduate credit toward the fulfillment of graduate degrees.

E. University Bulletins

As of 2009, the official University Undergraduate Bulletin and Graduate Bulletin exist in electronic form only.

The online bulletins are frozen on August 15 each year to establish the guidelines and regulations under which each incoming class matriculates. The August 15 bulletin becomes the archived bulletin of record for the coming academic year, containing the official language used to describe academic programs at USC. Both the Undergraduate and Graduate bulletins are maintained by the Office of the Registrar. Changes to the bulletins must be approved by the appropriate faculty governance bodies.

Senior campuses and professional schools on the Columbia campus each have academic bulletins/catalogs subject to the unit-wide faculty governance approval policies of those units.

II. Procedure

A. Procedure for Senior Campuses

Each Senior campus should develop individual campus-based procedures to implement this policy.

B. Procedure for Columbia and Regional Campuses

Detailed procedures have been developed regarding the creation, revision or elimination of a course as well as ongoing oversight of courses in each of the following areas. See Section III: Appendices. Required forms are available online at www.sc.edu/provost/acadprog.

III. Appendices

- Appendix 1: New Course Approval Procedures
- Appendix 2: Course Change Approval Procedures
- Appendix 3: Special Topics Course Approval Procedures
- Appendix 4: Non-Standard Course Session or Schedule Exception Approval Procedures
- Appendix 5: Course Delivery Method -- Distance Education Approval Procedures
- Appendix 6: Course Delivery Location -- Off-Campus Approval Procedures

IV. Related Policies

- University Policy ACAF 2.00 Creation and Revision of Academic Programs
- University Policy ACAF 2.04 Dual Enrollment Courses
- University Policy BTRU 1.04 Authority to Sign Contracts