

## **COURSE PREREQUISITES, COREQUISITES AND ADVISORIES ON RECOMMENDED PREPARATION**

Prerequisites, co-requisites, advisories, and limitations are necessary to ensure that students succeed in their coursework and have access to the courses they require. It is important to have prerequisites in place where they are a vital factor in maintaining academic standards. It is also necessary to ensure that prerequisites, co-requisites, advisories, and limitations do not constitute unjustifiable obstacles to student access and success. Therefore, to foster the appropriate balance between these two concerns, the Education Code requires that prerequisites, co-requisites, advisories, and limitations be established based solely on content review or content review with statistical validation.

Title 5, Section 55003(d) delineates the four purposes for which prerequisites and corequisites may be established:

1. the prerequisite or corequisite is expressly required or expressly authorized by statute or regulation;
2. the prerequisite will assure that a student has the skills, concepts, and/or information needed to succeed (receive a satisfactory grade) for the course it is established;
3. the corequisite will assure that a student has the skills, concepts, and/or information needed to succeed (receive a satisfactory grade) for the course it is established; and
4. the prerequisite or corequisite is needed to protect the health or safety of the student or others.

### **I. College Policies and Procedures**

#### **A. Information in the Catalog and Schedule of Classes**

Each college shall provide the following explanations both in the college catalog and in the schedule of classes.

1. Definitions of prerequisites, corequisites, and limitations on enrollment including the differences among them and the specific prerequisites, corequisites, and limitations on enrollment which have been established.
2. Procedures for a student to challenge prerequisites, corequisites, and limitations on enrollment and circumstances under which a student is encouraged to make such a challenge. The information about challenges must include, at a minimum, the specific process including any deadlines, the various types of challenge that are established in law, and any additional types of challenge permitted by the college.<sup>1</sup>
3. Definitions of advisories on recommended preparation, the right of a student to choose to take a course without meeting the advisory, and circumstances under which a student is encouraged to exercise that right.
4. Definitions of contract course, co-requisite, noncredit basic skills course, non-degree-applicable basic skills courses, prerequisite and satisfactory grade.

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## B. Challenge Process

Any student who does not meet a prerequisite or co-requisite or who is not permitted to enroll due to a limitation on enrollment but who provides satisfactory evidence may seek entry into the course as follows.

1. If space is available in a course when a student files a challenge to the prerequisite or co-requisite, the District shall reserve a seat for the student and resolve the challenge within five (5) working days. If the challenge is upheld or the District fails to resolve the challenge within the five (5) working-day period, the student shall be allowed to enroll in the course.
2. If no space is available in the course when a challenge is filed, the challenge shall be resolved prior to the beginning of registration for the next term and, if the challenge is upheld, the student shall be permitted to enroll if space is available when the student registers for that subsequent term.<sup>2</sup>
3. Grounds for challenge, as specified in part by Title 5, Section 55003(p), shall include the following.
  - a. The prerequisite or corequisite has not been established in accordance with the district's process for establishing prerequisites and corequisites;
  - b. The prerequisite or corequisite is in violation of this section;
  - c. The prerequisite or corequisite is either unlawfully discriminatory or is being applied in an unlawfully discriminatory manner;
  - d. The student has knowledge or ability to succeed in the course or program despite not meeting the prerequisite or corequisite;
  - e. The student will be subject to undue delay in attaining the goal of his or her educational plan because the prerequisite or corequisite course has not been reasonably available;
  - f. The student seeks to enroll in a course which has a prerequisite established to protect health and safety, and the student demonstrates that he or she does not pose a threat to himself or herself or others.<sup>3</sup>
  - g. The student has the obligation to provide satisfactory evidence that the challenge should be upheld. However, where facts essential to a determination of whether the student's challenge should be upheld are or ought to be in the college's own records, then the college has the obligation to produce that information.<sup>4</sup>

## C. Curriculum Review Process

The curriculum review process at each college shall at minimum be in accordance with all of the following.

1. Establish a curriculum committee and its membership in a manner that is mutually agreeable to the college administration and the academic senate.
2. Establish prerequisites, corequisites, and advisories on recommended preparation (advisories) only upon the recommendation of the academic senate except that the academic senate may delegate this task to the curriculum committee without forfeiting its rights or responsibilities under Title 5, Section 53200-53204 and within the limits set forth in Title 5, Section 55003. Certain limitations on enrollment must be established in the same manner.

3. Establish prerequisites, corequisites, advisories on recommended preparation, and limitations on enrollment on a course-by-course basis using either content review with statistical validation or content review alone, or conceivably both. To meet the requirements for adoption by either option colleges are required to meet the following requirements:
  - a. The faculty in the discipline or, if the college has no faculty member in the discipline, the faculty in the department do all of the following:
    - (1) approve the course<sup>5</sup>; and
    - (2) as a separate action, on a course by course basis, approve any prerequisite or corequisite, only if the prerequisite or corequisite is an appropriate and rational measure of a student's readiness to enter the course or program; as demonstrated by a content review including, at a minimum, all of the following:
      - i. involvement of faculty with appropriate expertise;
      - ii. consideration of course objectives set by relevant department(s). The curriculum review process should be done in a manner that is in accordance with accreditation standards;
      - iii. be based on a detailed course syllabus and outline of record, texts, related instructional materials, course format, type and number of examinations, and grading criteria;
      - iv. specification of the body of knowledge and/or skills which are deemed necessary at entry and/or concurrent with enrollment;
      - v. identification and review of the prerequisite or corequisite courses which develops the body of knowledge and skills identified under iv; and reference to a valid assessment procedure or instrument that measures these;
      - vi. matching of the knowledge and skills in the targeted course (identified under iv.) and those developed or measured by the prerequisite or corequisite (i.e., the course or assessment identified under v.); and
      - vii. maintain documentation that the above steps were taken.
    - (3) Approve any limitation on enrollment that is being established for an honors course or section, for a course that includes intercollegiate competition or public performance, or so that a cohort of students will be enrolled in two or more courses, and, in a separate action, specify which.
    - (4) Approve that the course meets the academic standards required for degree applicable courses, non-degree applicable courses, non-credit courses, or community service respectively.<sup>6</sup>
      - i. Review the course outline to determine if a student would be highly unlikely to receive a satisfactory grade unless the student had knowledge or skills not taught in the course. If the student would need knowledge or skills not taught in the course itself, then the course may be approved for degree applicable credit only if all requirements for establishing the appropriate prerequisite have been met excepting only approval by the curriculum committee.

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- ii. Review the course outline to determine whether receiving a satisfactory grade is dependent on skills in communication or computation. If receiving a satisfactory grade is sufficiently dependent on such skills, then the course may be approved for degree applicable credit only if all requirements have been met for establishing a prerequisite or corequisite of not less than eligibility for enrollment to a degree-applicable course in English or mathematics, respectively.
- iii. A course which should have a prerequisite or corequisite as provided in (a) or (b) but for which one or more of the requirements for establishing a prerequisite have not been met may only:
  - be reviewed and approved pursuant to the standards for non-degree applicable credit, non-credit, or community service; (Title 5, Section 55002), or
  - be revised and reviewed as required to meet the criteria for establishing the necessary prerequisites or corequisites.<sup>8</sup>
- iv. The curriculum committee also reviews the course and prerequisite in a manner that meets each of the specified requirements.

#### **D. Program Review**

As a regular part of the Program Review process or at least every six years, except that the prerequisites and co-requisites for vocational courses or programs shall be reviewed every two years (Title 5, Section 55003(b)(4)), the college shall review each prerequisite, corequisite, or advisory to establish that each is still supported by the faculty in the discipline or department and by the curriculum committee and is still in compliance with all other provisions of this policy and with the law. Any prerequisite or corequisite shall be reviewed promptly thereafter to assure that it is in compliance with all other provisions of this policy and with the law.

#### **E. Implementing Prerequisites, Corequisites, and Limitations on Enrollment**

Implementation of prerequisites, corequisites, and limitations on enrollment must be done in a consistent manner and not left exclusively to the classroom instructor. Every attempt shall be made to enforce all conditions a student must meet to be enrolled in the course through the registration process so that a student is not permitted to enroll unless he or she has met all the conditions or has met all except those for which he or she has a pending challenge or for which further information is needed before final determination is possible as to whether the student has met the condition.<sup>9</sup> The determination of whether a student meets a prerequisite shall be based on successful completion of an appropriate course or on an assessment using multiple measures. (Title 5, Section 55003(k)) Any exit test that may be required to satisfy a prerequisite or corequisite must be incorporated into the grading for the prerequisite or corequisite course. (Title 5, Section 55003(n))

#### **F. Instructor's Formal Agreement to Teach the Course as Described**

Each college shall establish a procedure so that courses for which prerequisites or corequisites are established will be taught in accordance with the course outline by a qualified instructor, particularly those aspects of the course outline that are the basis for justifying the establishment of the prerequisite or corequisite. The process shall be established by consulting collegially with the local academic senate and, if appropriate, the local bargaining unit.

For prerequisites requiring precollegiate skills in reading, written expression, or mathematics, regardless of the level of scrutiny (content review with statistical validation or content review alone), colleges must also:

1. ensure that courses and sections designed to teach the required skills are available with reasonable frequency based on the number of students who are required to meet the prerequisites (Title 5, Section 55003(l)(1)); and
2. conduct an evaluation to determine the impact on student success and whether there is any disproportionate impact. Where there is disproportionate impact, develop and implement a plan, in consultation with the Chancellor's Office, to correct the disproportionate impact. (Title 5, Section 55003(l)(2)(A) and (B))

## II. Review of Individual Courses

If the student's enrollment in a course or program is to be contingent on his or her having met the proposed prerequisite(s) or corequisite(s), then such a prerequisite or corequisite must be established as follows. If enrollment is not blocked, then what is being established is not a prerequisite or corequisite but, rather, an advisory on recommended preparation and must be identified as such in the schedule and catalog. Establishing advisories does not require all the following steps.

### A. Advisories on Recommended Preparation

Each college may recommend that a student meet a standard of readiness at entry only if recommended by the faculty in the discipline or department and by the curriculum committee as provided in Section I. This process is required whether the college used to describe such recommendations in its catalog or schedule as "prerequisites," or "recommended," or by any other term.

### B. Limitations on Enrollment

The types of limitation on enrollment specified below<sup>10</sup> may only be established through the curriculum review process by the discipline or department faculty and the curriculum committee specified above including the requirement to review them again at least every six years, for example, as part of program review. The following requirements must also be met in order to establish these particular limitations on enrollment.

#### 1. Performance Courses

Each college may establish audition or tryout as a limitation on enrollment for courses that include public performance or intercollegiate competition such as but not limited to band, orchestra, theater, competitive speech, chorus, journalism, dance, and intercollegiate athletics provided that:

- a. For any certificate or associate degree requirement which can be met by taking this course, there is another course or courses which satisfy the same requirement; and
- b. The college includes in the course outline or record a list of each certificate or associate degree requirement that the course meets and of the other course or courses which meet the same requirement.
- c. Limitations on enrollment established as provided for performance courses shall be reviewed during program review or at least every six years to determine whether the audition or try-out process is having a disproportionate impact on any historically underrepresented group and, if so, a plan shall be adopted to seek to remedy the disproportionate impact.<sup>11</sup> If

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disproportionate impact has been found, the limitation on enrollment may not be printed in subsequent catalogs or schedules nor enforced in any subsequent term until such a plan has been endorsed by the department and the college administration and put into effect. (See also Title 5, Sections 55502(e) and 55512.)

**2. Honors Courses<sup>12</sup>**

A limitation on enrollment for an honors course or an honors section of a course may be established if, in addition to the review by the faculty in the discipline or department and by the curriculum committee as provided above, there is another section or another course or courses at the college which satisfy the same requirements. If the limitation is for an' honors course and not only for an honors section, the college must also include in the course outline of record a list of each certificate or associate degree requirement that the course meets and of the other course or courses which meet the same associate degree or certificate requirement.

**3. Blocks of Courses or Sections<sup>13</sup>**

Blocks of courses or blocks of sections of courses are two or more courses or sections for which enrollment is limited in order to create a cohort of students. Such a limitation on enrollment may be established if, in addition to review by the faculty in the discipline or department and by the curriculum committee as provided above, there is another section or another course or courses that satisfy the same requirement. If the cohort is created through limitations on enrollment in the courses rather than limitations on specific sections of courses, then the college must include in the course outline of record a list of each certificate or associate degree requirement that the course meets and of the other course or courses which satisfy the same associate degree or certificate requirement.

**4. Content Review**

In order to provide the colleges with the option to establish prerequisites or corequisites in reading, written expression or mathematics for degree-applicable courses not in a sequence using content review alone (without statistical validations), the Board adopts the following requirements as a plan:

- a. The method used to determine which courses might be the most compelling candidates for new prerequisites and corequisites will be based on an analysis of a minimum of six semesters of data showing student success, retention, withdrawal and failure for the course(s) under consideration
- b. The provision of appropriate numbers of prerequisite and corequisite course sections to be determined based on the number of courses and sections proposed for prerequisite or corequisite implementation and the number of students impacted
- c. Colleges will not establish prerequisite or corequisites on more than 50% of the degree applicable courses for any given program using content review alone in order to insure that other degree applicable courses are available such that student progress toward their educational goals is not unnecessarily impeded
- d. Colleges will provide training for the curriculum committee including how to request, evaluate and interpret student success and enrollment data as it pertains to the establishment of prerequisites and corequisites

- e. Colleges will use research to evaluate the effect of new prerequisites and corequisites on student success; particular attention should be given to disproportionate impact.

Title 5, Sections 53200 et seq., 53200-53204, 55002, 55002(a)(2)(D)(E), 55003, 55003(b)(4)(d)(k)(n)(p), 55003(l)(1), 55003(l)(2)(A) and (B), 55502(e), 55512

**The Model District Policy**

**Footnotes**

1. Colleges should also publish this information in the student handbook, if the college publishes one, or in whatever other documents that are published to assist students in understanding college rules and procedures.
2. The college has an obligation to resolve challenges in a "timely manner." (See Title 5, Section 55003(p)). However, the student should not wait until the last minute to file the challenge. If the college could not meet the one-week timeline, it could reserve a seat for the student or make provision in its policies on maximum class size to exceed the set size for such a student.
3. The Federal Government's Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires further that if a student with a disability seeks admission to a course which has a prerequisite designed to protect health and safety, then the burden is on the college to establish that there is no accommodation available that would protect health and safety and permit the student to enroll without undue costs to the district.
4. For example, if a student challenges on the basis of claiming that a prerequisite was not established properly, that the student must show some legitimate reason for believing that the prerequisite was not established properly. However, if the student makes a prima facie case, the college must then produce the relevant information from its own files and not expect the student to request the files and search out the information.
5. The main point here is that the faculty, and the curriculum committee as well, must approve the prerequisite as a separate action from any approval of the course. However, it is not required that the faculty in the department in fact approve the course, although there are obvious reasons why that is recommended good practice. Title 5 requires only approval of the course by a curriculum committee that is a committee of the Academic Senate or established in a manner agreeable to the Senate and the campus administration. (Title 5, Section 55002) Title 5 further requires that prerequisites and all academic and professional matters be matters for the board to rely primarily on the Senate or reach joint agreement with it. (Title 5, Sections 53200 et seq.)
6. Individual courses will need to be reviewed first to determine whether, if appropriate academic standards are upheld, the students would need to have met a prerequisite or enroll in a corequisite: "When the college and/or district curriculum committee determines, based on a review of the course outline of record, that a student would be highly unlikely to receive a satisfactory grade unless the student has knowledge or skills not taught in the course, then the course shall require prerequisites or corequisites which are established, reviewed, and applied in accordance with the requirements of Article 2 (commencing with Title 5, Section 55002(D)) )," and "If success in the course is dependent upon communication or computation skills, then the course shall require ... as pre- or corequisites eligibility for enrollment in associate degree credit courses in English and/or mathematics, respectively." (Title 5, Section 55002(a)(2)(E), emphasis added) Secondly, the texts and other grading criteria for the course would need to be examined to see whether in actual fact the students do need to have the indicated skills or knowledge. If a course should require a prerequisite as determined by the first review, but does not meet the criteria required for establishing the prerequisite, then it must be revised so it does meet that standard, or it may not be offered as a degree applicable credit course.
7. It is possible to have degree applicable courses which have no prerequisites at all. For example, although reading would be assigned in an art history class, it might be possible to learn enough through visual and auditory means to get a satisfactory grade even though the student had difficulty with the reading and, yet, the level of instruction be collegiate.

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8. For example, the committee receives a proposal for a physics course that is described as requiring calculus. The curriculum committee would first determine whether a calculus prerequisite seemed necessary to the course being taught at the indicated level. Since this course would appear to need a calculus prerequisite, the second step is to see whether all the requirements have been met for establishing such a prerequisite. If they have not, then the committee could not approve the course unless either (a) the further work was done to meet all the requirements for a prerequisite; or (b) the course was approved only for non-degree applicable credit, non-credit, or community service.
9. For example, this further information might require waiting for a final grade from the previous semester to be submitted or an assessment test to be scored. If a college is not able to put information into its data base from the transcripts of all students transferring into the college, it could simply inform the student that, according to their data, he or she has not met the prerequisite. If the student believes a course taken at another institution should satisfy the prerequisite, the student could then file a challenge and be enrolled in the course pending the resolution of the challenge. A college may also routinely ask students at the time of registration if they have met the prerequisite for the course in question and permit the student to enroll if the student says he or she has met the prerequisite. The college must then routinely check to confirm that the student has indeed met the prerequisite and, if not, the student's enrollment be canceled even if Instruction has already begun.
10. These limitations on enrollment are academic matters and need to be established through the curriculum process. Other limitations on enrollment may also be determined to be academic and professional matters as provided in Title 5, Section 53200 et seq., or be included in collective bargaining agreements or be imposed by outside agencies such as fire departments. This document should not be interpreted to require or encourage any particular method for establishing other limitations on enrollment.
11. The determination of disproportionate impact should normally be done by comparing students enrolled in the course to the general student population.
12. If the honors section is a separate course, and an articulation agreement exists that treats the course differently upon transfer or if there are other extrinsic, concrete benefits to taking the honors course, then restriction on enrollment should be established as provided for prerequisites rather than as provided here for limitations on enrollment.
13. The Puente Program is perhaps the most well-known example of such a program.