Easy Guide to Curriculum Procedures at Gavilan College

Is curriculum work complex and arbitrary? Not really.

Is it easy and logical? Yes, for the well prepared.

Curriculum design and modification can seem complex and arbitrary if you don't approach the processes with a realistic view of the work involved and the close level of scrutiny your proposals may receive at the Curriculum Committee level. With both those considerations in mind, the Curriculum Committee has tried to quickly and simply guide faculty, both newcomers and veterans who may not have kept up with changing state and college standards, in getting the job done right the first time. If you follow the steps below, you will avoid 90 percent of the problems posed at the Curriculum Committee level. The process can be easy and logical.

So please, read on.

But before you do, note that italicized points have to do with procedures you should be aware of in advance. For example, we've had a problem getting people to use the proper, most updated forms in the past. Therefore, a few preliminary tips on procedures:

Tip #1: Obtain the most up to date versions of curriculum forms by visiting the Gavilan website at http:/www.gavilan.edu/curriculum/ . At that location, you might also check out the most current version of the guidebook that's available; the Curriculum Committee sometimes changes or refines procedures.

Tip #2: For any change to go into effect quickly, keep in mind two things: one, that it is best to bring your proposals to the Curriculum Committee by mid-September or mid-February if you wish to effect the change in time for the following semester, and two, that proposals affecting articulation could take several months, or even a year or longer, to work out with the four-year colleges and universities. It is good practice, for the benefit of students, to refrain from offering classes until they are fully articulated.

Modify an existing course: "Modify a Course" form *(Form C)*

If you wish to change a course's units, content, title, description, grading system, etc. The "Modify a Course" form is also used to delete a course.

1. Discuss the matter at a department meeting and get approval.

2. Obtain the existing course outline from the Curriculum Specialist, Self Service Banner or the Intranet, as well as the "Modify a Course" form from the curriculum website.

3. Enter the additions/changes/corrections to the applicable sections of the "Modify a Course" form. The curriculum committee will need the entire outline, so this is a good opportunity to give it a general update, with special attention to the sections that get outdated most rapidly: the topic by topic chronology, the text/s and reading levels, and the objectives as they relate to out-of-class assignments and assessment, for which we use a form that has a range of percentages as options.

Tip #3: If you do not give your attention to updating the whole outline your particular change may be tabled or passed contingent upon your update of the outline; this is the only checkpoint the college has to ensure that course outlines are maintained up to date.

If you wish to add a prerequisite to an already established class, the prerequisite cannot be required until validation is completed and accepted by the Curriculum Committee. See section on prerequisites.

4.   Get signatures from your Department Chair and area Dean before the deadline set for curriculum committee consideration. Included in this guide is a checklist to be used by department chairs and deans before they sign curriculum; you might want to give it a glance beforehand to be sure you have all that they will be looking for. Turn in a hard copy of the completed, signed documents, along with either a disk or e-mail copy to the Curriculum Specialist. Deadline dates and times are posted on the Curriculum website.

Tip# 4: The committee cannot consider curriculum without these signatures. Get them before you turn in the curriculum to avoid problems later. Note: Forms turned in without all applicable signatures, or after the deadline, may not be placed on the Agenda.

5. Plan to attend the curriculum meeting in case committee members have questions. If you or your department representative are not present to answer questions, your proposal will probably be tabled.

Tip #5: It is the curriculum committee's procedure to table items for which there is no department representative present. It also tables curriculum when the department chair is present but unable to answer questions about the curriculum. Thus it is highly advisable that the author/s of curriculum be present to discuss it.

New Course Proposal: First Reading *(Requires two readings)*

When student demand, developments in your field, or college priorities justify a new course:

1. The new course should originate in discussion at the department level and be supported in concept by vote at a department meeting.

2. Interested faculty should research similar courses at other two-year and four-year colleges, and assess where the similar courses fit into AA, GE, major and/or transfer patterns. Often consultation at the department and deans' levels is helpful at this point, and you should come up with a brief but telling course description, which is invaluable in helping articulate classes. Also read through this guide, as many stumbling blocks are addressed.

Tip #6: Find as many examples of similar classes at other CCs, as well as CSUs and UCs, as possible. At least one of each is required or needed.

3. The next step is to obtain the most current version of the "New Course Proposal-First Reading" form from the Curriculum website and fill it out, getting signatures from your Department Chair and Area Dean. Turn in a hard copy of the completed, signed documents, along with either a disk or e-mail copy to the Curriculum Specialist. Deadline dates and times are posted on the Curriculum website.

4. Plan to attend the meeting.

Tips #4 and 5 come up again: It is the curriculum committee's procedure to table items for which there is no department representative present, and you do need those signatures on forms.

5. Try to include a mixture of courses--some taught at two-year colleges, and some lower division courses taught at four-year colleges--on the New Course Proposal form, so committee members can get a sense of offerings at other colleges. Research transfer and articulation issues until they are clear to you. Refer to ASSIST for examples of similar courses at other institutions, especially those that transfer to 4-year universities, if the new course is intended to be transferable. A link to ASSIST is available on the curriculum website.

6. Discuss library resources with the librarian, and research what might be needed in order to support student learning. Indicate on the New Course Proposal form which librarian gave you the verification information. Make a list for the librarians, with clearly indicated priorities, so they know what materials to purchase first. You will need a budget for the acquisition of the materials. No verification discussion is necessary regarding technological resources, but find out what Gavilan has, and needs to support your class. Otherwise the class may be approved only to never be offered, particularly if the technology gap is very large.

7. Do not be alarmed if curriculum committee members have questions for you about the proposed course; the First Reading allows faculty to float ideas and to surface potential issues or concerns that can be addressed in the Second Reading.

New Course Proposal: Second Reading (Includes Course Outline)

The course outline section of the form becomes the course outline of record, a legally enforceable document that ensures students will receive course content that meets college standards. Thus it is important to take the time to do a thorough, good job. The curriculum committee chair has copies of model course outlines, a few of which are copied into this guide, and of a State Faculty Senate booklet that is helpful in suggesting how to link course objectives to topics to assignments to assessment. Meanwhile:

1. Obtain the most current version of the "New Course Proposal - Second Reading" form from the Curriculum website, and fill it out. Make any changes to the form that may have come up during the first reading.

2. Devise objectives and a topic by topic chronology that meets those objectives. Indicate the number of hours it would take to cover each topic.

3. Devise out-of-class assignments and assessments and link them to the objectives and chronology. Write these so that teachers with a variety of approaches can teach under the same outline; for example, it might be better to require a research project than to specify a 10-page research paper. Sticking points in this area are often having enough work to justify the units offered, having objectives that link to the content and assignments, having measurable objectives, and having assessment methods explained beyond simply stating that you use essay or skill demonstrations.

Tip #7: Refer to the State Faculty Senate booklet and do a thorough job on assignments, objectives, chronology, and assessments. Some outlines flounder because they are incomplete.

4. Develop Student Learning Outcomes and link them to the Institutional Learning Outcomes. Indicate how each learning outcome is going to be measured. Refer to Bloom's Taxonomy for writing measurable outcomes. Also refer to the Academic Senate website for curriculum resources and the Curriculum Handbook for Good Practices in developing courses and programs. Links are available on the curriculum website.

5. Do a readability formula check on textbook/s proposed (See Readability" section later in this handout if you need help.) Indicate the year published and publisher information for each textbook. The textbook section includes the phrase "...or a comparable college-level text" to allow instructors flexibility in choosing a textbook.

6. Bring to curriculum committee for discussion/approval. Turn in a hard copy of the completed, signed documents, along with either a disk or e-mail copy to the Curriculum Specialist. Deadline dates and times are posted on the Curriculum website.

Tips #4 and 5 come up again: It is the curriculum committee's procedure to table items for which there is no department representative present, and you do need those signatures on forms.

7. Remember that including advisory or pre-requisite classes in your curriculum will require one more form, the Advisory/Prerequisite form, for content validation at the time the course is approved (or, at least, before the advisory/prerequisite can be listed in the schedule). Prerequisites may also require later consequential validation--the Committee is working to define levels of scrutiny for different kinds of classes. With new classes, prerequisites start life as advisories so their validity as prerequisites can be tested. See section below on prerequisites.

Non Degree-Applicable Courses

See above, but do remember that these courses are those numbered 200 and above, and do not fit into GE, AA, or transfer patterns. Note: there may also be fewer out-of-class assignments than there would be in a degree-applicable course on the same topic.

Distance Education - Form D

Form D is used to allow a course to be offered through nontraditional methods of delivery, such as the Internet, televised lectures, or videos. Obtain the most current Form D from the Curriculum website. Be prepared to justify an alternative delivery mode. If the course has not been updated in more than 4 years, you will also need to update the course outline. See procedures for "Modify a Course" form above.

Experimental/emergency/short term courses, Form E, 99s, 199s, 299s, 399s, etc.

This category exists to give an opportunity to try out good ideas that may or may not fly as permanent courses. They may be transferable or non-transferable. Follow directions for the new course, as explained above. The Form E allows for preliminary approval in concept by the Vice President of Instruction and Curriculum Committee Chair.

Special Topics courses - 98s, 198s, 298s, 398s, etc.

These courses are essentially shells with content that can change by semester. A good example would be a Latin American history class whose shell includes the same structure of analysis, research, and tests, but whose topics would rotate through various countries in Latin America--Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, etc. The Argentina topics course would be History 98A, while Mexico would be 98B, Colombia 98C, etc. Special topics courses give flexibility, but the foreseeable variations should be included on the initial new course proposal and course outline, along with the shell outline and brief outlines for each variation. Additional variations, such as adding a History 98F on Nicaragua, would require a "Modify a Course" form. Note that these can be offered in any discipline. Check with receiving/transfer institutions to see if limits are imposed upon the number of Special Topics units that may be transferred in.

Application for new credit program - Form CCC-501

Obtain Form CCC-501, "Application for new credit Program".   Begin discussions at the department and Faculty Senate levels. Note that you will also be asked to research demand for the major, visit the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, and prepare much information on the need for the new major program. Especially important will be a discussion of program outcomes, which must be measurable. This whole process takes longer than the other curriculum procedures; it undoubtedly will take a year or more to do all the work required to establish a new major program.

Non Substantial Changes to an existing program - Form CCC-511

If you are adding or deleting a course from a major program, changing the order in which it should be taken, or changing its emphasis within the program, obtain and fill out Form CCC-511, "Non-Substantial Changes to Approved Program". Follow the usual procedures of getting signatures and attending the meeting.

Substantial changes to existing program - Form CCC-510

If you need to make substantial changes to a degree or certificate program, obtain and fill out Form CCC-510, "Substantial changes to existing program". Follow the usual procedures of getting signatures and attending the meeting. Note that departmental approval is key on this form, as changes to a major program will affect many classes and students. See the "Supplement to the Program and Course Approval Handbook, 2nd Edition, for definition of "substantial changes to existing programs."

Procedure or policy establishment or modification, Form P

Because the Curriculum Committee is charged with dealing with many procedural and policy questions in addition to specific courses and degrees, the committee has established a procedure for creating or changing a procedure or policy. First, important definitions: A POLICY often originates at the committee level, but must ultimately be adopted by the district's board of trustees as official policy of the district, whereupon it is added to the catalog of district policies kept in the president's office. Policies tend to be broad outlines that enable action at the curriculum level, i.e., our policy on prerequisites. A PROCEDURE is a process that is followed by college staff, and agreed upon at some level/s below the district board of trustees. With that said, note that the Form P requires some thoughtful legwork on the part of whoever fills it out, so that all interested parties to a policy or procedure are consulted. The Form will also require the originator to predict the impact of the change upon staffing, finances, enrollment, matriculation, etc. Research into like policies at other colleges is recommended.

General Education for AA explained

Gavilan offers many classes, but not all of them are general and universal enough to be added to the list of General Education courses for the AA degree. If you think your course is of general, universal, and durable value, it may be a candidate for GE for AA. Read the policy on GE carefully and discuss your view with your department chair and/or dean. It would help to know whether similar classes are considered GE for the AA elsewhere.

Course numbering explained

1-99--AA: degree applicable, transfer and baccalaureate degree-applicable class
100-199: Associate degree-applicable; potentially transferable and baccalaureate
          degree-applicable
200-299: Associate degree-applicable and/or certificate applicable; non-transferable
300-399: Non degree-applicable and non transfer; occupational
400-499: Developmental; note that students are limited to 20 units in classes more than
          one level below the transfer/baccalaureate degree level.
500-599: Special population courses such as those for ESL students.
700-799: Non Credit Courses

Grading

You can designate your course to be: (1) graded only with ABCDF, (2) pass/no pass only, (3) option of a letter grade or pass/no pass, depending on the student's wishes or (4) pass/no pass only. If a course has been approved for the third option (and most existing Gavilan courses need "Modify a Course" form in order to be so approved), students will make the arrangement with the Admissions Office, and when teachers assign a letter grade at the end of the semester it will be converted automatically to a pass/no pass grade, thus sparing instructors paperwork.

Lecture and lab units explained

Lecture and lab hours attempt to estimate what kind of time will be required of students inside the class room (i.e., class hours) as well as outside of it. Generally speaking, one unit should equal three hours of course-related effort. This formula applies neatly to all-lecture classes, but may undergo some changes in courses that are partly or completely composed of lab hours.

In general, a lecture class is one in which the instructor is the main focus during class time. S/he may direct students in exercises and other assignments, but generally, in a lecture class, information passes from teacher to student and/or the teacher orchestrates student activities and discussions. Such a class has an easy formula to follow in figuring the appropriate expectations of student workload. For every academic hour spent in the classroom per unit, students will be expected to spend two hours outside the classroom doing supplemental work evaluated by the instructor. Thus in a three-unit class that meets three times a week for an hour, students (to earn an average grade, assuming they are average students) will generally also be expected to do six additional hours of outside-class work. In a one-unit class that meets one hour a week, students (to earn an average grade, assuming they are average students) will generally also be expected to do two additional hours of outside-class work. And so on.

Lab classes are generally focused on student discovery learning or meaningful activity involving course materials. A class that offers purely lab units follows the same basic formula, though labs in general do not involve out-of-lab assignments. Thus a three-unit lab requires nine hours of total work, but generally all nine hours take place in the lab. Note that instructors MAY choose to write curriculum with lab hours above and beyond the three hours per unit. The main concern in requiring more than the standard minimum is that students may perceive that the class is more work than it is worth.

Classes that combine lecture and lab are also designed and taught at Gavilan. Thus there may be a three unit class that divides into one unit of lecture and two units of lab. The lecture unit may take up one hour a week, and involve two hours of out-of-class assignments in addition to six units of lab. Such a class would meet state standards because it involves nine hours a week

of student participation. The class could also divide into two lecture units with four hours of related out-of-class work, and three hours of lab. Again, it adds up to the necessary nine hours.

LEH factor or Lecture Equivalency Hour

Tip #8: This is only relevant for lab classes.
Normally, full-time faculty are expected to teach 14-16 units per semester. Less than 14 is an underload, more than 16 is an overload. The LEH factor allows the college to determine an adequate load for instructors, and how to pay instructors who teach labs. (LEH is irrelevant to lecture classes; it stands for Lecture Equivalency Hour, and lecture classes count hour for hour. One lecture hour = one LEH.) The worth of labs in a given department has usually been assigned on a department basis. Generally, the LEH factor is based on the amount of work generated from the lab for instructor evaluation, and the amount of preparation needed for the lab. Your dean or department chair can tell you what your departmental LEH are. They are usually between .65-.75 LEH, and are established by collective bargaining contract. The number of hours in a course is multiplied by the LEH factor to determine how much of a teacher's load a lab class constitutes. For example, a three unit class with an LEH of .7 counts for 2.1 units of an instructor's load. More evaluation and more preparation will mean a .75 LEH; less will mean a .65 LEH.

Cross-listing courses

Cross-listed courses can be approved by two departments simultaneously, or they can be added to one department and later added to another through a cross listing. As a rule, courses can be cross listed if the course is required for a program or certificate in both disciplines. The method for cross listing courses is:

1. Gain departmental approval from all departments concerned

2. Follow procedures for a "Modify a Course" form.

Readability

Degree-applicable Gavilan courses must use college-level texts. There are a number of ways to ensure that the college is doing so. The curriculum chair and the reference librarian have the standard Fry readability formula available for your use. Some computer software will also check readability on segments of the textbook that you type or scan in.

Advisories, prerequisites, co-requisites

Often classes at Gavilan should not be attempted by students who have not passed lower level classes. There are three ways that this message can be given to students: Advisories are listed along with the course description, and state what classes are recommended before the student attempts the course in question. Any course can have an advisory if the advisory is reasonable; new courses should have advisories documented using a content validation form available from the curriculum website. In order to fill out the form, one should have course outlines from both the relevant classes. Skills from the earlier class are listed in the column on the left, and how those skills are helpful in the later class is explained on the right.

Pre-requisites are listed along with the course description, and state what class/es are required before a student attempts the course in question. Once a prerequisite is set and validated, it MUST be enforced--that is, students must get a C or better in the early class to enroll in the later class. The suggested procedure for pre-requisites at Gavilan is two pronged: first, a carefully filled out content validation form, available at this website and as comprehensively completed as

is possible. And second, a consequential validation survey may be administered to students in the later class. The curriculum committee suggests than in order to gather a large enough sample of students, the survey should be administered to all students taking the class in a two-year period, or a minimum of fifty students. The survey should be administered approximately one-quarter to one-half ways through the class/es. Naturally, consequential validation means that a new course must be taught at least once before students in it can be surveyed; the state actually allows up to two years for colleges to gather information, and there are some alternative methods such as showing that a similar prerequisite is required at least three four-year college campuses. The college researcher can assist with this process. Until prerequisite validation is final, a class that needs a prerequisite will have to be taught with only an advisory. Check with the Curriculum Committee chair for details.

Co-requisites are courses that must be taken at the same time a student is enrolled in the course in question. Co-requisites must be validated and treated like pre-requisites, above.

Errors, inconsistencies, problems?

Contact the Curriculum Specialist or Curriculum Committee chair.

Checklist for department chairs, deans, and curriculum chair

Please use this checklist before signing off on any curriculum.

_____ All questions on the form are filled in completely and legibly.

_____ Lecture and Lab hours are correct.

_____ Questions requiring research (transferability, resource needs) have been adequately researched & answered.

_____ Proper spelling and syntax are used.

_____ Readability calculation is done, if applicable.

_____ Course outlines include the proper number of hours for each topic.

_____ Course outlines have performance objectives linked to out of class assignments.

_____ The new course proposal indicates library and technological capacity to handle the course, or a means to do so in the future.

_____ Methods of Evaluation sheet is filled out correctly and included.

_____ Advisory/prerequisite sheet is filled out correctly and included as needed.

_____ Cross-listed classes have dual department approval.

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