

**PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE
TITLE 5 REGULATIONS:
POLICIES FOR PREREQUISITES,
COREQUISITES AND ADVISORIES**

4.1

FIRST READING (PUBLIC HEARING ITEM)

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Issue

This item proposes revisions to title 5, division 6, chapter 6, subchapter 1, article 1, section 55003 that allow community college districts to establish prerequisites, corequisites, and advisories on recommended preparation based on content review on a course-by-course or program-by-program basis. The proposed change removes the requirement that prerequisites and corequisites must be established only on the basis of data collected using sound research practices and allows faculty to establish prerequisites and corequisites using content review. Content review is the process used by higher education faculty throughout the United States to establish prerequisites for college courses.

Background

Several publications have addressed the need for establishing prerequisites designed to improve student success, including: Nancy Shulock, *Rules of the Game* (2007) and *It Could Happen* (2008), and Paul Steenhausen, Legislative Analyst's Office, *Back to Basics: Improving College Readiness of Community College Students* (2008)¹. (Currently, prerequisites generally do not apply across disciplines. For example, there is typically no reading or writing prerequisite for a college level psychology class.) In response to the recommendations in these publications, the Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges (ASCCC) passed over time several resolutions, culminating in Resolution 9.02, Spring 2009, which included the following: "That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges recommend changes needed to title 5 language on prerequisites that, instead of relying on statistical analysis, allow local faculty to

¹ See Nancy Shulock, *Rules of the Game* (2007) and Elizabeth L. Hill, Legislative Analyst's Office, *Back to Basics: Improving College Readiness of Community College Students* (2008)

base their determination for prerequisites of English, reading, or mathematics for collegiate level courses on content review.” At the same time, a Strategic Plan Action Planning Group came to a similar conclusion.

In Fall 2009, the Academic Senate established a Prerequisite Task Force to consider the range of issues that would arise from making changes to the regulation regarding the establishment of prerequisites. The Task Force included representatives from the ASCCC Curriculum Committee, the CIO Executive Board, the CSSO Board, the Student Senate, and the Chancellor’s Office (both academic affairs and student services divisions). A CEO liaison was also subsequently appointed.

The System Advisory Committee on Curriculum (SACC) had three discussions on the regulation and finalized the proposed revisions to title 5, section 55003 on March 26, 2010.

The revised regulation was presented to the Consultation Council for discussion at its April 15, 2010 meeting. There was no opposition to the proposed changes.

Analysis

The Prerequisite Task Force believes that local board policy will need to be changed in order to allow local curriculum committees to begin using content review to establish prerequisites beginning fall 2010. Revised prerequisites could appear in catalogs beginning fall 2011, which is the earliest that changes could affect students, provided the recommended timetable is adhered to.

There has been agreement throughout these discussions on these three issues (1) it is crucial to be clear that these changes are intended to improve student success; (2) local implementation will be challenging given capacity constraints and initial changes in the pattern of course offerings; and (3) it is prudent to adopt these changes in the current climate in which demand far exceeds capacity and in which the predictable outcome will result in more efficient use of campus resources while improving student success.

The current method of establishing prerequisites of English, reading, or mathematics for collegiate level courses based only on research data has provided high levels of student access while sacrificing student success. The existing regulation prohibits colleges from establishing prerequisites unless significant numbers of students prove unsuccessful in courses. Faculty can justify prerequisites only when students fail, which is *not* the outcome colleges should provide for their students.

Community colleges that are satisfied with establishing prerequisites based on research will be permitted to continue to use this method. The primary goal of this change is to increase student success throughout the California community colleges. It is vital to the economic well-being of the California community college system that more students be prepared to pass college courses the *first* time they enroll, so that limited capacity can be made available to students enrolling and

succeeding on their first attempt rather than providing multiple enrollments to students who are not prepared.

Conclusion

The proposed regulation change to title 5, section 55003, is presented to the Board for a first reading. The Board should hold a public hearing and consider any testimony which is offered. It is anticipated that the proposed regulation changes will be presented to the Board for action at the July 2010 meeting.

*Staff: Stephanie Low
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ATTACHMENT 1

Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges Proposed Revisions to the Title 5 Regulations: Policies for Prerequisites, Corequisites and Advisories

1. Section 55003 of article 1 of subchapter 1 of chapter 6 of division 6 of title 5 is amended to read:

55003. Policies for Prerequisites, Corequisites and Advisories on Recommended Preparation.

(a) The governing board of a community college district may establish prerequisites, corequisites, and advisories on recommended preparation, but must do so in accordance with the provisions of this article. Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to require a district to establish prerequisites, corequisites, or advisories on recommended preparation; provided however, that a prerequisite or corequisite shall be required if the course is to be offered for associate degree credit and the curriculum committee finds that the prerequisite or corequisite is necessary pursuant to sections 55002(a)(2)(D) or 55002(a)(2)(E).

(b) A governing board choosing to establish prerequisites, corequisites, or advisories on recommended preparation shall, in accordance with the provisions of sections 53200-53204, adopt policies for the following:

(1) The process for establishing prerequisites, corequisites, and advisories on recommended preparation. Such policies shall provide that in order to establish a prerequisite or corequisite, the prerequisite or corequisite must be determined to be necessary and appropriate for achieving the purpose for which it is being established. ~~District policies shall also specify the level of scrutiny that shall be required in order to establish different types of prerequisites, corequisites, and advisories on recommended preparation. At a minimum, p~~Prerequisites, corequisites, and advisories on recommended preparation shall be based on content review, ~~with additional methods of scrutiny being applied depending on the type of prerequisite or corequisite being established. The policy shall provide that the types of prerequisites described in subdivision (e) may be established only on the basis of data collected using sound research practices.~~ Determinations about prerequisites and corequisites shall be made on a course-by-course or program-by-program basis.

~~(2) Procedures to assure that courses for which prerequisites or corequisites are established will be taught in accordance with the course outline of record, particularly those aspects of the course outline that are the basis for justifying the establishment of the prerequisite or corequisite.~~

(2) As required for all courses in section 55002, "Each section of the course is to be taught by a qualified instructor in accordance with a set of objectives and with other specifications defined in the course outline of record."

(3) The process, ~~including levels of scrutiny,~~ for reviewing prerequisites and corequisites to assure that they remain necessary and appropriate. These processes shall

provide that at least once each six years all prerequisites and corequisites established by the district shall be reviewed, except that prerequisites and corequisites for vocational courses or programs shall be reviewed every two years. These processes shall also provide for the periodic review of advisories on recommended preparation.

(4) The bases and process for an individual student to challenge the application of a prerequisite or corequisite.

(c) Prerequisites or corequisites may be established only for any of the following purposes:

(1) the prerequisite or corequisite is expressly required or expressly authorized by statute or regulation; or

(2) the prerequisite will assure, consistent with section 55002, that a student has the skills, concepts, and/or information that is presupposed in terms of the course or program for which it is being established, such that a student who has not met the prerequisite is highly unlikely to receive a satisfactory grade in the course (or at least one course within the program) for which the prerequisite is being established; or

(3) the corequisite course will assure, consistent with section 55002, that a student acquires the necessary skills, concepts, and/or information, such that a student who has not enrolled in the corequisite is highly unlikely to receive a satisfactory grade in the course or program for which the corequisite is being established; or

(4) the prerequisite or corequisite is necessary to protect the health or safety of a student or the health or safety of others.

(d) Except as provided in this subdivision, no prerequisite or corequisite may be established or renewed pursuant to subdivision (b)(2) or (b)(3) unless it is determined to be necessary and appropriate to achieve the purpose for which it has been established. A prerequisite or corequisite need not be ~~so scrutinized~~ subject to content review until it is reviewed pursuant to subdivision (b)(2) or (b)(3) if:

(1) it is required by statute or regulation; or

(2) it is part of a closely-related lecture-laboratory course pairing within a discipline; or

(3) it is required by four-year institutions.

~~(e) A course in communication or computation skills may be established as a prerequisite or corequisite for any course other than another course in communication or computation skills only if, in addition to conducting a content review, the district gathers data according to sound research practices and shows that a student is highly unlikely to succeed in the course unless the student has met the proposed prerequisite or corequisite. If the curriculum committee initially determines, pursuant to section 55002(a)(2)(E), that a new course needs to have a communication or computation skill prerequisite or corequisite, then, despite subdivision (d) of this section, the prerequisite or corequisite may be established for a single period of not more than two years while the research is being conducted and the final determination is being made, provided that all other requirements for establishing the prerequisite or corequisite have been met. The requirements of this subdivision related to collection of data shall not apply when:~~

~~(1) baccalaureate institutions will not grant credit for a course unless it has the particular communication or computation skill prerequisite; or~~

~~(2) the prerequisite or corequisite is required for enrollment in a program, that program is subject to approval by a state agency other than the Chancellor's Office and both of the following conditions are satisfied:~~

~~(A) colleges in at least six different districts have previously satisfied the data collection requirements of this subdivision with respect to the same prerequisite or corequisite for the same program; and~~

~~(B) the district establishing the prerequisite or corequisite conducts an evaluation to determine whether the prerequisite or corequisite has a disproportionate impact on particular groups of students described in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age or disability, as defined by the Chancellor. When there is a disproportionate impact on any such group of students, the district shall, in consultation with the Chancellor, develop and implement a plan setting forth the steps the district will take to correct the disproportionate impact.~~

~~(f)(e) Prerequisites, corequisites, and advisories on recommended preparation must be identified in college publications available to students as well as the course outline of any course for which they are established.~~

~~(g) Prerequisites establishing communication or computational skill requirements may not be established across the entire curriculum unless established on a course-by-course basis.~~

~~(f)(f) 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, as required by section 55521(a)(3). Any assessment instrument shall be selected and used in accordance with the provisions of subchapter 6 (commencing with section 55500) of this chapter.~~

~~(g)(g) If a prerequisite requires precollegiate skills in reading, written expression, or mathematics, the governing board of a district shall:~~

~~(1) ensure that nondegree-applicable basic skills courses designed to teach the required skills are offered with reasonable frequency and that the number of sections available is reasonable given the number of students who are required to meet the associated skills prerequisites and who diligently seek enrollment in the prerequisite course.~~

~~(2) Monitor progress on student equity in accordance with section 54220.~~

~~(h)(h) Whenever a corequisite course is established, sufficient sections shall be offered to reasonably accommodate all students who are required to take the corequisite. A corequisite shall be waived as to any student for whom space in the corequisite course is not available.~~

~~(i)(i) No exit test may be required to satisfy a prerequisite or corequisite unless it is incorporated into the grading for the prerequisite or corequisite course.~~

~~(j)(j) The determination of whether a student meets a prerequisite shall be made prior to his or her enrollment in the course requiring the prerequisite, provided, however, that enrollment may be permitted pending verification that the student has met the prerequisite or corequisite. If the verification shows that the student has failed to meet the prerequisite, the student may be involuntarily dropped from the course. If the student is dropped, if the applicable enrollment fees are shall be promptly refunded.~~

Otherwise a student may only be involuntarily removed from a course due to excessive absences or as a result of disciplinary action taken pursuant to law or to the student code of conduct.

~~(m)~~(k) Any prerequisite or corequisite may be challenged by a student on one or more of the grounds listed below. The student shall bear the initial burden of showing that grounds exist for the challenge. Challenges shall be resolved in a timely manner and, if the challenge is upheld, the student shall be permitted to enroll in the course or program in question. Grounds for challenge are:

(1) The prerequisite or corequisite has not been established in accordance with the district's process for establishing prerequisites and corequisites;

(2) The prerequisite or corequisite is in violation of this section;

(3) The prerequisite or corequisite is either unlawfully discriminatory or is being applied in an unlawfully discriminatory manner;

(4) The student has the knowledge or ability to succeed in the course or program despite not meeting the prerequisite or corequisite;

(5) 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 made reasonably available; or

(6) Such other grounds for challenge as may be established by the district governing board.

~~(n)~~(l) In the case of a challenge under subdivision ~~(m)~~(k)(3) of this section, the district shall promptly advise the student that he or she may file a formal complaint of unlawful discrimination pursuant to subchapter 5 (commencing with section 59300) of chapter 10 of this division. If the student elects to proceed with the challenge, completion of the challenge procedure shall be deemed to constitute an informal complaint pursuant to section 59327.

~~(o)~~(m) District policies adopted pursuant to this section shall be submitted to the Chancellor as part of the district's matriculation plan pursuant to section 55510.

Note: Authority cited: Section 70901, Education Code. Reference: Section 70901, Education Code.

ATTACHMENT 2

Excerpt from Prerequisites Revisited Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Draft April 20, 2010, Pages 7 - 9

In cooperation with the Chancellor's Office, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) has the responsibility for providing support and best practices to accomplish this change in title 5. The following is a draft excerpt that provides an explanation of the content review process and establishes the high level of scrutiny provided by the curriculum committee on each campus.

The purpose of documented content review is to examine claims regarding the existing sequence and hierarchy in the curriculum through a close and critical reading of course outlines. Local colleges should develop their own content review process. "Content review" is defined in title 5 regulations: "'Content review' means *a rigorous, systematic process*...approved by the Chancellor as part of the district matriculation plan...and that is conducted by faculty to identify the necessary and appropriate body of knowledge or skills students need to possess prior to enrolling in a course, or which students need to acquire through simultaneous enrollment in a corequisite course" (§55000, emphasis added). Moving from data collection and analysis to content review is *not intended to make the process of establishing prerequisites "easier" or less rigorous*; rather, it shifts the focus to the *kind* of data to be examined and analyzed by the local curriculum committee, from *quantitative and statistical* data to the *narrative* data included in the college's official course outline of record.

Typically, the content review process is accepted by vote of the curriculum committee and involves a form and/or explanation for content review which is included in the college curriculum handbook. In short, three steps are involved. First, the discipline faculty who teach the course examine:

- class materials
- course outlines, including objectives, methods of instruction and evaluation
- required and recommended reading
- exams, projects, essay requirements
- student learning outcomes
- other elements of the class related to student success
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If, in the analysis of the discipline faculty, the students would be highly unlikely to succeed without one or more previously-acquired skills, then the faculty should consider proposing a prerequisite. Next, the faculty in the discipline should agree, either by consensus or vote, on the entrance knowledge or skills to recommend. Finally, the best means by which students can acquire these skills should be identified. This is usually a course—but not always. Examples of non-course requisites might include typing speed for a computer course or a high school biology class for a college biology class.

Analysis begins with content review: identifying skills without which the student is highly unlikely to succeed. Agreement of the discipline faculty on these skills, either by consensus or vote, is important. In some cases it may help to have each faculty member rank the skills, for example on a scale such as 1-to-5, for the degree of impact on student success. A mean score above certain level, e.g. 4, might be recommended before advancing the skill for the prerequisite. The appropriate course (or assessment score, or preparation evaluated by multiple measures) which teaches these skills is then proposed. This analysis is used to establish prerequisites within a sequence or across a sequence, such as prerequisites for vocational courses, which have no UC/CSU equivalents. The term “in a sequence” does not imply that the courses are numbered or lettered sequentially—or even that the courses are in the same discipline. If the course content of A is structured to lead into course B and students normally take B after A, clearly the courses are sequential. Examples include so-called “service courses” such as *Chemistry 70*, *Pharmaceutical Chemistry* (in the chemistry discipline) as a prerequisite for *Pharmacy 101: The Chemical Basis of Pharmacology* (in the pharmacy technology discipline).

- ***This method of analysis is also used to establish prerequisites for communication or computation, which formerly required data collection and analysis, the former “third level of scrutiny.”***
- ***The elimination of the requirement to collect data for course level prerequisites does not reduce the need for the collection and evaluation of data in other aspects of prerequisite validation or in the matriculation process more broadly.***

Once again, the curriculum committee approves the course outline and the prerequisite by separate action. In evaluating the proposed prerequisite, the committee is checking that 1) the content review process was followed, 2) the proposed prerequisite course does indeed teach the needed skills (and that both the target and prerequisite course outlines demonstrate this—perhaps using a grid analysis such as that shown below), and 3) the course outline is complete, well integrated, coherent, and meets title 5 standards. (For more on effective course outlines, see the Academic Senate’s *The Course Outline of Record: A Curriculum Reference Guide*, 2008).

Many community college curriculum committee members will recognize the following as an example of a content review grid that depicts graphically the alignment between the exit skills (course objectives) and entry skills of a course to which it is compared.

| | Course proposing a prerequisite (Entrance Skills) | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| | | Skill or knowledge 1 | Skill or knowledge 2 | Skill or knowledge 3 | Skill or knowledge 4 | Skill or knowledge 5 |
| Proposed Prerequisite (Exit Skills) | Skill or knowledge 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | |
| | Skill or knowledge 2 | | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| | Skill or knowledge 3 | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| | Skill or knowledge 4 | | | | | |
| | Skill or knowledge 5 | | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

In the matrix above, the local curriculum committee reviews a grid (or other clear documentation) that clearly demonstrates an alignment between knowledge or skills provided in the course proposed as a prerequisite and the entrance skills of course to which it is proposed as a prerequisite. The “*objectives*” section of the course outline of the proposed prerequisite includes the knowledge and skills that a student successfully completing the course should have mastered. Some colleges use a grid that includes exit and entry skills from a course and its proposed prerequisite. It is not necessary that these grids be part of the course outline but it is necessary that the curriculum committee have conducted an appropriately rigorous review of the course outline and its proposed prerequisite before approving the proposal, once again with separate action for *both* the course outline *and* the prerequisite.