

GUIDELINES FOR NEW COURSE PROPOSALS TO THE COLLEGE CURRICULUM COUNCIL (1-1999 LEVEL)

These guidelines were developed by the College Curriculum Council Screening Committee and approved by the full Council. While this document summarizes a number of policies of the CCC, particular attention is called to the suggested appropriate workloads. They are intended to assist new faculty by giving them a sense of the usual practice in Brown undergraduate courses. The guidelines are based on the workloads assigned in courses approved by the CCC in recent years. Summer school courses, being intensive 6-week courses, usually involve double the weekly reading and writing assignments described below.

I. When is a New Course Proposal required?

Full proposals are required when:

- A. a faculty member proposes an entirely new course.
- B. a course is taught by a graduate student. Graduate students may teach regular academic-year courses only in special circumstances, *e.g.*, when other staff are not available because of sabbatical leave. The proposal for such a course must include an explanation from the proposing department of the reason for the assignment. In both regular and Summer School courses, proposals for graduate student instructors must include a CV, a departmental evaluation of teaching ability, and a full syllabus for the course. A proposal must be supplied every time a graduate student teaches a regular course. The Summer School has only to notify the CCC of satisfactory teaching evaluations for graduate student instructors offering a course for the second time.
- C. a topics course is taught by a visitor, including adjunct faculty.
- D. a course is converted from a special topics course to a regular offering.
- E. a course has not been taught for eight years, or it has not been taught for five years and the instructor who proposed it is no longer at Brown. (This policy reflects the standard adopted by the CCC on April 9, 1996 for Departments continuing to advertise courses as possibly available.)
- F. a course is to be renumbered in a way that implies a change in level, *i.e.*, from a course below 1000 level to one above or vice versa.
- G. a course is to have a major change in subject matter or pedagogy. We expect Brown faculty to update course material routinely, and this process does not involve CCC review. An example of changes requiring a new filing is a change from a lecture to a seminar format. Another is a change from a general survey to a course with a narrow focus even though the region or system studied may be similar.

II. Who reviews course proposals?

Course proposals to the CCC are reviewed first by the Screening Committee, a subcommittee of the CCC with a membership of four faculty, the Registrar *ex officio*, one student representative, and a representative of the University Library. We try to make this a careful review and may request revisions or clarifications if the intent and organization of the proposal are not clear to us. While the subcommittee has broad representation from the faculty, it is likely that most proposals are not read by specialists in the particular fields. They should be written with that possibility in mind. Finally, the proposals are made available to all members of the CCC before the Screening Committee's recommendations are voted on.

III. The Course Description and Related Matters

The first section of the proposal form asks for the course description as it will appear in the on-line catalog and eventually in the triennial *University Bulletin*. As such, it is the public record of the content of a Brown course not only for current students but also prospective students and other outside parties. It will be kept in the University's archives indefinitely. The wording should be considered carefully and seriously. It should be concise and complete, offering a real sense of the topics to be covered. While the description may be technical, it should avoid jargon. It may be no longer than 150 words and should include a statement of prerequisites. Please be careful to distinguish prerequisites that are recommended from those to be enforced by the Banner system. If specific prerequisites are enforced by Banner, students lacking them will not be able to enroll without an override from you. If the course enrollment is limited or enrollment always requires an override, the description should include the criteria that will be used in granting permission to enroll. Should the basic description be

very technical, we ask that you expand the explanation in a second question to make the content of the course clear to those without background in the field.

We also ask that you explain who would benefit from taking the course. We have found this information quite helpful both to the Committee and to prospective students, and it is often non-obvious. We encourage you to include that statement in your syllabus, on your course web site, and on the course preview site.

IV. Educational Objectives, Content, and Assessment

The preferred response to this second section of the proposal form is to attach a full syllabus. The Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning offers a handbook on *Constructing a Syllabus* with examples of format, content, good practice, etc. to help in the development of syllabi. This and other resources are available directly or electronically from the Sheridan Center (email Sheridan_Center@brown.edu, phone 863-1219, or visit the center's web site at www.brown.edu/Administration/Sheridan_Center). The CCC believes that faculty will find these materials very useful.

Whether you submit a syllabus or answer the Content and Assessment section, your proposal should provide a sense of the actual scope and importance of the subject of the course, how the course fits into the educational objectives of the College, and how it will function. The reading and the other requirements that make up the course workload should be explained in enough detail that both the Committee and prospective students can understand what is expected of participants. The impulse to teach an "important" topic is only the beginning of a proposal.

V. Enrollment Policies

Enrollment limits are subject to the policies given in the *CCC Guidelines for Enrollment Limitations*, which is available on-line from the Office of the Registrar at www.brown.edu/Administration/Registrar. *Enrollment limits are enforced by the Banner system. It is not necessary for you to require written permission.*

When an enrollment limit is requested for pedagogical reasons, the reasons should be given in the space provided on the course proposal form. (Note: A separate, shorter form, available from either the Registrar's office or the Office of Faculty Governance, may be used when the only request is a change in the enrollment limit of an existing course. When the course itself needs no approval, there is no need to complete the entire course proposal form.)

If a limit is desired because of limited resources, either personnel (TAs, technicians, etc.) or facilities, a separate request must be submitted to the Dean of the Faculty. The form for the request is available from either the Registrar's office or the Office of Faculty Governance.

Once an enrollment limit is granted, it must be administered fairly, openly, and promptly with the goal of assuring settled enrollments equitably determined by the end of the second week of classes. The process by which overrides will be granted should be advertised in the course description if practicable or at least on a course or departmental web site that is readily accessible.

Instructors may wish to require written permission for enrollment in the form of a Banner override for reasons other than supporting a numeric limit. Two common reasons are, first, to check prerequisite skills or knowledge in courses where those are difficult to specify simply, and, second, to gain an early acquaintance with prospective students. It is expressly CCC policy that *overrides may not be used as an enrollment limiting mechanism* unless an enrollment limit has been explicitly granted. Moreover, written permission should not be used to set the enrollment artificially below the level granted.

A related issue that affects the choice of requiring overrides is the limitation of certain courses, especially upper level seminars, to concentrators in a particular discipline. While students recognize that concentrators may need preferential access to such seminars, a strict limitation of this kind as enforced by Banner may be regarded as unfair if the course is not fully subscribed. Using overrides as a way to give concentrators preference while exercising judgment about giving enthusiastic some non-concentrators access as well is probably good policy and the CCC encourages that practice.

VI. LL and DP Courses

The Office of the Dean of the College decides whether to designate a course as a Liberal Learning or Diversity Perspectives course. Such courses are listed in a separate section of the on-line catalog, are marked in the course

descriptions of the on-line catalog, and are included in a list distributed to all incoming students in the fall. The CCC encourages faculty to nominate their courses for such listing if they meet the criteria.

A. Liberal Learning courses provide students with an effective introduction to the many ways of thinking and of approaching knowledge that comprise a liberal education, and they are characterized by a pedagogical emphasis on active student involvement. These courses are also particularly accessible to students outside of the discipline and emphasize synthesis rather than survey. They focus on the methods, concepts, and values employed in understanding a particular topic, theme, or issue. The approach may be that of a single discipline or may be interdisciplinary. In all cases, extensive student participation through papers, projects, reports, and class discussion is the norm. Virtually all departments and disciplines offer Liberal Learning courses. They are listed under seven headings which give a sense of the scope of the program: World Civilizations and Cultures; Social Analysis and Approaches to Social Issues; Science and Scientific Ways of Thinking; Mathematics and Symbolic Languages; Creative Arts, Literature, and Other Modes of Expression; Ability to Communicate Effectively in Writing; and Ethics and Responsibilities to Society and the World at Large.

B. Diversity Perspectives courses reflect the experiences in and contributions to American society of non-European peoples—particularly Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. They include courses in which the central thrust is specifically the experience of one or more of these groups and courses in which a substantial segment is devoted to the exploration of some aspect of the minority experience in the United States.

VII. Grading Considerations

Most Brown courses offer students the choice of either a letter grade (A, B, C, or NC) or a simple Satisfactory/No Credit evaluation—the S/NC option. Some professors, however, choose to offer a course with only the S/NC grading option by marking the appropriate block on the *New Course Proposal* form. This is most often done for courses designed to draw students whose background preparation or personal skills might make study of the material especially difficult. It may also reflect the difficulty in certain areas of making fine numerical distinctions in performance, for example, in Visual Art, creative writing, and music or theater performance courses.

VIII. Repeatability

Brown presumes that students will gain most of the benefits of taking a course by taking it only once. A few courses, however, may be taken for credit more than once because their content changes from semester to semester. Examples of this include independent study courses, thesis preparation courses, and rotating topics courses. If the course proposed is a rotating topics course, that should be indicated on the appropriate line of the departmental review section of the form. If the proposal is for a general rubric under which various related but independent courses will be offered, please indicate if, and how many times, the course should be repeatable with a change of topic. Only these courses should be marked as repeatable for credit.

IX. Workload

The amount and type of work expected of our students varies with the general area of study (humanities, creative arts, social science, etc.) and with the level of the course. The following are approximate guides based on recent experience.

A. 1-999 Level Courses:

1) Courses at the 1-999 level are limited to undergraduates and are usually intended primarily for freshmen and sophomores. Many courses at this level do not involve prerequisites, although prerequisites may be required when appropriate. *Because many of the students in 1-999 level courses will be relatively inexperienced, the CCC believes that instructors should provide several opportunities for evaluation and feedback to them.* It is important that some written work be evaluated early in the term, certainly well before the middle of the semester.

2) Reading assignments: Reading assignments of 100-200 pages per week are typical, unless the reading material is particularly difficult. In science and mathematics courses, the reading is often about 30-80 pages per week.

3) Writing assignments: The CCC prefers to see a series of writing assignments spaced across the semester as opposed to a single term paper due the final week of class. Courses that rely more on papers than

examinations may require a short paper (3-5 pages) every week or every other week or some combination of short papers with a long one.

4) Examinations: In courses that rely heavily on examinations, two hourly examinations are often given in addition to a final. When only a midterm and final are given, as in some science and math courses, evaluation is often supplemented with weekly quizzes. Again, it is very important for students to receive some feedback on their mastery of the material before the middle of the term.

5) Problem sets: Mathematics, economics, science, computer science, and engineering courses often require 5-10 problem sets during the semester. If problem sets are used, their role (if any) in final evaluation should be made clear to students.

6) Laboratories: Most courses involving labs require written reports following each laboratory assignment.

7) Other assignments: Other assignments sometimes include oral reports, speeches, the student's presentation of his or her creative project, etc. Please be specific about the probable use of these types of work on your proposal. When assignments of this type are employed, or when "class participation" figures in the grading, it is important that students know at the start of the course how they will be evaluated.

B. 1000-1999 Level Courses

1) The CCC expects that more advanced courses above the 1000 level will require prerequisites or that students will be carefully screened by the instructor to determine that they have sufficient background for the course. The CCC discourages instructors from including freshmen in the same course with graduate students due to the difficulty of successfully teaching students of widely varying academic backgrounds in the same course.

2) Reading assignments: Reading assignments of 150-300 pages per week are not uncommon in humanities and social science courses. The reading is lighter when the material is particularly difficult or when it involves a great deal of quantitative material. In science courses, the reading is often 75 pages per week or less.

3) Writing assignments: Whenever feasible, the CCC encourages writing assignments in addition to or in place of examinations. When a midterm and a final examination are given, one or more shorter papers may be assigned; one paper of 20 pages or less, or several 5-7 page papers are often required, for example. In seminars, a major research paper of 20-40 pages is often assigned. When a single paper is the primary basis for evaluation, the CCC advises requiring an outline or partial draft around the middle of the term. Again, the point is to give students an early sense of your expectations so they can adjust their work accordingly.

4) Examinations: Many courses require a midterm and a final. Advanced seminars may have only one exam or, in some cases, a major term paper may be assigned with no examinations.

5) Problem sets: Mathematics, economics, science, computer science, and engineering courses often require 5-10 problem sets during the semester. If problem sets are used, their role (if any) in final evaluation should be made clear to students.

6) Laboratories: Most courses involving labs require written reports following each laboratory assignment.

7) Other assignments: Other assignments sometimes include oral reports, seminar presentations, the student's presentation of his or her creative project, etc. Please be specific in listing the use of these options. When assignments of this type are employed, or when "class participation" figures in the grading, it is important that students know in advance how they will be evaluated. (The usual range of weighting for class participation in seminar courses is from 5 to 25 percent, while courses with other formats sometimes count class participation in discussion or presentations as 5 to 15 percent of the grade. These guidelines are not rigid but suggest usual practices.)

X. Course Level

Departments assign course numbers before proposals are submitted to the CCC. (The Registrar's office can assist departments in determining which numbers are available—not currently or recently used). The only guidance in this process offered by the Faculty Rules is that courses numbered 1000 and higher are generally more advanced and are suitable for graduate as well as undergraduate students. The CCC encourages numbering systems in which courses below the 1000 level are introductory and are aimed at freshmen through juniors while those above 1000 are aimed at sophomores through graduate students. Proposals that do not conform to this model in allowed student enrollment may require explanation for that deviation.

XI. Prerequisites

Given that 1000 level courses are supposed to be advanced, the CCC generally expects that they will require prerequisites. It is most helpful to students if those prerequisites can be specified in terms of particular courses at Brown. One common formula for this is 'MATHxxxx or MATHyyyy or permission of the instructor.' This sets clear expectations while allowing some latitude to accommodate students with unusual backgrounds or courage. Banner will enforce prerequisites if the appropriate box is checked on the proposal form. Students who do not meet the listed criteria will not be able to register for the course. However, often faculty wish to suggest that while a certain background will be helpful, it may be possible to undertake the course without that material. Such suggested background should also be included in the course description, but one may choose not to check the Banner box.

XII. Community-Based Learning, Field Trips, or Required Off-Campus Activities

Please indicate whether or not the course contains a community-based learning component. If it does, we ask that you notify the Swearer Center for Public Service. They also offer helpful materials about good practices in community-based learning. Courses involving activities in K-12 schools should be coordinated with both the Swearer Center and the Education Department. Liability waivers are required for student participation in field trips or such off-campus activities as visits to libraries, museums, or performances outside Providence. Waiver forms are available through the Office of the General Counsel and must be returned to that Office before the activity in question. Compliance with this rule is the responsibility of the faculty teaching the course. Faculty are also reminded to be sensitive to the cost of such activities for students.

XIII. Funding

Frequently, faculty seek funding to develop a course at the same time that they submit it to the CCC for listing. The CCC neither grants nor influences the granting of any such moneys. However, we do wish to know what the funds are for and whether the actual offering of the course is contingent on the funding.

XIV. Library Resources: Books, Electronic Resources, Music and Video Recordings, Films, etc.

Faculty must advise the library of any new course that will require library materials. Contact the Library Subject Specialist for the appropriate area. (A list of subject specialists is available on the Library's web site at <http://dl.lib.brown.edu/libweb/index.php>.) The Library's Collection Development Office will evaluate whether the resources are adequate or what might be possible to make them so before the course is offered. The Committee is particularly concerned about videos and films because the Library's collection is limited and costs are high. If the resources are inadequate, you must explain how sufficient material will be made available to your students. You are reminded that any mechanism to distribute material must comply with the University's copyright policies.

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