

Criteria for Approval of Online Providers and Courses to Satisfy UC Subject ('a-g') Requirements

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With the advent of new technologies, such as the Internet and web-based programs and services, and the rapid growth of online course delivery and virtual educational environments, the University of California (UC) has adopted these guidelines to assure quality and excellence among all online course providers who are thus identified with UC-approved "Program Status."

Once granted "Program Status," the provider is eligible to establish a program course list of approved a-g courses on the Doorways web site, at www.ucop.edu/doorways/list, that represents online courses that high school students in California may utilize to satisfy their a-g subject requirements for purposes of UC eligibility and admissions.

This policy is intended to be flexible enough to accommodate synchronous, asynchronous and blended online course providers, while simultaneously addressing the program features that UC faculty considers necessary to offer a quality online learning experience for students. These features include, among others, primary instruction and academic support by content experts, maintenance of a "human touch" in the learning process, and integrity of student assessment.

This policy represents a two-step process for approving online courses to satisfy the a-g requirements.

STEP 1: Approval of an online provider for "program status" (see attached "Application for Program Status for Online Course Providers")

STEP 2: Approval of specific courses offered by an online provider that has been granted "program status." All courses will be reviewed and evaluated against faculty-developed guidelines accessible at www.ucop.edu/doorways/guide.

STEP 1: CRITERIA FOR ONLINE PROVIDERS TO BE GRANTED PROGRAM STATUS

The criteria for approval of "program status" cover several categories, including organization, curriculum and instruction, learning environment, and technology infrastructure. Online providers are expected to satisfy ALL criteria.

1.0 Organization

The provider shall:

- 1.1. Exist as a public or private high school, college or university that is accredited by one of the regional accrediting commissions recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, or a public school district, county office of education, state department of education, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, or a for-profit company that develops online curricula. Organizations that serve as brokers or clearinghouses of online curricula developed by other providers are not eligible.
- 1.2. If not a regionally accredited high school, college or university, regularly conduct a program of continual self-evaluation directed toward program improvement, paying particular attention to the quality of student learning

- 1.3. Maintain an organizational goal to prepare students for competitive eligibility for college and university admission. Program status will be revoked if the provider does not present within the review period (3-5 years) UC-acceptable college preparatory curriculum.
- 1.4. Provide standardized courses taught consistently from term to term and from one educational site to another
- 1.5. Issue transcripts (bearing the name of the program, identifying logos, and contact information), inclusive of course credit and grades, to students who complete online courses and/or have in place a formalized process and documentation to ensure that students will receive credit from their home high school, if any, for online courses successfully completed
- 1.6. Have in place a learning structure with designated roles and responsibilities for individuals and organizations to ensure that a full range of student needs are met
- 1.7. Maintain permanent and accurate student records, including evaluation of student progress/success, and make data available to UC upon request
- 1.8. Undergo periodic program review by UC to maintain status as an approved provider (approximately every three to five years) and acknowledge UC's option to withdraw program status at any time, if warranted
- 1.9. Comply with federal, state, and local laws and guidelines governing service to those with disabilities, copyright laws, and protection of identity and protection of minors

2.0 Curriculum and Instruction

The provider shall:

- 2.1 Develop and deliver course curricula designed and/or reviewed by content experts (subject matter teachers, university or college faculty, and/or graduate degree holders in the designated subject area)
- 2.2 Require academically challenging projects, lessons and activities that involve substantial reading and writing, show serious attention to analytical thinking as well as factual content, and demand the critical thinking and study skills that students will need to be well prepared for university coursework
- 2.3 Offer quality courses that
 - 2.3.1 Demonstrate a level of academic rigor appropriate for college preparatory coursework
 - 2.3.2 Specify clear learning objectives for units, chapters, and lessons
 - 2.3.3 Clearly state prerequisites, if any
 - 2.3.4 Present material in a clear manner and include a comprehensive course syllabus and course calendar
 - 2.3.5 Specify required work for students (e.g., projects, papers)
 - 2.3.6 Include appropriate student assessments (e.g., practice questions, unit review questions, unit chapter quizzes, unit exams, semester midterms and final exams, essays, projects) with grading rubrics
 - 2.3.7 Have a clear grading policy with assessment weights
 - 2.3.8 Consist of visually rich and intellectually stimulating course content, which may include animations, simulations, interactivity, and videos, as appropriate for the subject, to enhance the students' learning experience

- 2.3.9 Require proctoring by a qualified professional (e.g., a school teacher, administrator, counselor, or paraprofessional who fulfills an instructional role, librarian, university personnel, or test center administrator) for key assessments, including examinations
- 2.3.10 Facilitate and promote substantial teacher-student learning interactions and, as appropriate, student-student interactions (e.g., bulletin board discussions, white board technology, or other online classroom tool)
- 2.3.11 Assure that course grades are assigned by highly qualified teachers who are credentialed in the subject area of study
- 2.4 Ensure that highly qualified teachers play a constant and active role in a learning process that supports and guides student academic achievement, as evidenced by
 - 2.4.1 Assigning subject expert teachers who meet the criteria (highly qualified) under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act, as specified by law in each state, and who have submitted Livescan (fingerprinting) documentation to the provider
 - 2.4.2 Requiring that teachers maintain active, regular contact with students (at least weekly) and, as appropriate, with other on- or off-site student support personnel, in order to nurture academic growth throughout the course
 - 2.4.3 Ensuring supplementary help by teachers or other student support staff based on individual student needs
 - 2.4.4 Providing to online teachers ample research-based pre-service training and ongoing professional development to support student success in the online environment

3.0 Learning Environment

The provider shall:

- 3.1 Acknowledge that learning is a interactive process and, as such, ensure that students have regular and meaningful academic interactions with highly qualified teachers and/or other content experts such that, in addition to simple acquisition of content knowledge, students are guided in their development of necessary skills (e.g., writing, literary analysis, critical thinking, problem solving, research, foreign language speaking and comprehension, scientific inquiry, public speaking, creativity, etc.)
- 3.2 To the degree possible, align course schedules with a student's home school academic calendar, if any, to assure availability of school-site resources (e.g., certificated teachers, science lab facilities, computer labs, library services, counselors, and student peers)
- 3.3 Identify qualified professionals (e.g., mentors, supervisors, facilitators, or counselors) and/or offer training to parents who provide on-site student support services, which may include
 - 3.3.1 Determining advisability (based on technological proficiency, level of motivation, etc.) of pursuing online coursework for individual students
 - 3.3.2 Providing an orientation and assisting students to start their course on schedule
 - 3.3.3 Verifying compliance with technical specifications (i.e., student access to specified programs and computer equipment) to assure regular and reliable course access (see section 4.0 below)
 - 3.3.4 Assuring appropriate course placement and regularly monitoring student progress
 - 3.3.5 Meeting with students on a regular basis to discuss their progress and identify problems

- 3.3.6 Acting as a student's advocate and keeping regular contact with the online teacher (by email or telephone) to address any academic concerns
- 3.3.7 Setting and maintaining rigorous course participation expectations for students
- 3.3.8 Encouraging students to use the program's resources (e.g., program staff, helpdesk, client/student services)
- 3.3.9 Monitoring email on a regular basis for program notifications, instructor notifications, and students' emails
- 3.3.10 Intervening and working with online teachers when students are failing and/or not progressing
- 3.3.11 Contacting the program immediately when problems arise (e.g., communication, academic issues or technical issues)
- 3.3.12 Arranging for proctoring of key assessments
- 3.3.13 Assuring the program's courses are included on the home school's UC a-g course list, as appropriate
- 3.3.14 Confirming that grades are posted to the students' transcripts
- 3.3.15 Providing a range of other support services, such as library resources, guidance and counseling, and tutoring
- 3.4 Unless granted special permission from UC to offer online labs, arrange for students who are taking online science courses to use an on-site wet lab facility to complete required lab work, and ensure
 - 3.4.1 That a qualified professional (i.e., science teacher) coordinates and supervises on-site wet lab sessions that meet UC course requirements (see www.ucop.edu/a-gGuide/ag/a-g/science_reqs.html)
 - 3.4.2 The availability of necessary tools, materials, and supplies, as specified in the course
 - 3.4.3 The availability of sufficient laboratory work space
 - 3.4.4 The availability of the lab for the full duration of time, as specified in the course
 - 3.4.5 The maintenance of a safe environment
- 3.5 Ensure lessons and examinations are graded within a week and the results communicated to the student and student support staff (e.g., mentors/supervisors, parents)
- 3.6 Ensure questions and inquiries from students and student support staff are satisfactorily answered within one business day
- 3.7 Provide reports on a weekly basis or provide online access to key stakeholders (e.g., students, mentors/supervisors, parents)

4.0 Technology Infrastructure

The provider shall:

- 4.1 Maintain a learning (or course) management system that
 - 4.1.1 Assures reliable course access, delivery, records management, teaching and learning tools, and security for both data and participants
 - 4.1.2 Ensures the authenticity of student work and the validity of assessments and grades

- 4.1.3 Provides access to authorized users only
- 4.1.4 As appropriate, supports the creation and maintenance of an online learning community for each course
- 4.1.5 Delineates technical specifications (e.g., hardware, software) and provides technical support, resolving problems or reporting on status within 24 hours
- 4.1.6 Supports the delivery, restricted access, and grading of multiple assessment formats (e.g., short answers, essays, projects, portfolios, multiple choice, true-false questions, free response) and allows teachers to manage the assessments
- 4.1.7 Provides an online grade book for teachers and students
- 4.1.8 Supports synchronous and/or asynchronous communication for study sessions (and possibly office hours) via multiple methods, which may include email, telephone, fax, bulletin boards, whiteboards, threaded discussions, computer conferences, and virtual classrooms
- 4.1.9 Provides on-site support staff (i.e., mentors/supervisors, parents) with access to student grade reports on a regular (i.e., weekly) basis or 24-hour online access
- 4.1.10 Captures and archives all electronic communication between teachers and students, between teachers and support staff, and between teachers and parents/guardians

STEP 2: CRITERIA FOR ONLINE COURSES TO SATISFY THE A-G SUBJECT REQUIREMENTS

In general, the criteria for approval of online courses shall be consistent with the faculty-developed criteria for approval of classroom-based courses (accessible at www.ucop.edu/doorways/guide).

As delineated in the UC policy regarding organizations and/or programs with designated “program status,” all online course descriptions shall be reviewed and approved by UC faculty members.

Until further notice, online courses in the visual and performing arts (VPA) will not be approved unless they combine online content delivery with adequate face-to-face interaction with an appropriately credentialed teacher who can guide the students’ development of creative skills and artistic expression.

When approved online providers submit to UC courses for a-g approval, they shall indicate if a textbook is required or if textual material has been incorporated into the online content. They should also include information about ancillary materials that have been incorporated into course curricula.

In order to review online courses, the course content, in its entirety, must be made available by the provider (free of charge) for UC faculty review.