Best Practices for Successful Course and Curriculum Proposals

This document provides suggestions and best practices for courses, curricula, and contacting impacted units. The content here should help academic units develop quality proposals suitable for adoption at K-State.

When a proposal comes forward that fails to meet certain standards, the proposal is likely to be tabled while additional research, clarification, or corrections occur. Not only does this slow the approval process, but it also creates substantially more work for faculty senators, staff, and even the proposing unit.

It is in everyone's best interest to create quality proposals that will be approved with minimal discussion in committees.

Contents

Courses

Numbering, Prerequisite, and Corequisite

The course numberings should follow the general university definitions based on class standing. As such, courses should typically not have a corequisite or prerequisite, that is, a higher-level course, based upon 100s.

If the courses are across colleges, this may occasionally be acceptable, but within the same college, the practice is highly discouraged. Courses at the 100 and 200 levels should have zero or a very limited number of prerequisites. Most courses over 400 should have a corequisite or prerequisite course.

Graduate courses should not have prerequisites at the 100 or 200 level.

If a course is a prerequisite to a course that is also a prerequisite, then only the last course in the sequence should be listed as a prerequisite.

For example:

- *Calculus I is a prerequisite to Calculus II.*
- *A course requiring Calculus II as a prerequisite should not also list Calculus I as a prerequisite.*

Titles

In most situations, avoid short or long titles. Abbreviations or acronyms in the long title should be avoided if possible. Typically, abbreviations in a title involve a professional organization or credential.

An example of a suitable abbreviation in the title is NCAA Coaching Certification. If an abbreviation is used in the title, the meaning of the abbreviation should appear in the description.

Course Examples

Several examples are taken from either the K-State catalog or submitted proposals.

Sample of poorly written title and description for a new course

Course Title: *ENGL 324 -Television.*
Description: *Study of television as a genre from historical beginnings to contemporary moment. Emphasis on form and critical analysis.*
Typically Offered: Fall, Spring, Summer
Credits: 3
Prerequisite: *ENGL 200 or instructor permission*

Title: The title is weak. "Television" is not descriptive of any content. The title provides minimal knowledge of what will be taught/learned.

Description: The first line is excellent and describes the purpose of the course. The remainder of the description is very short and provides a minimal description of what students can expect. Additionally, different sections of the course could cover different genres, which creates vastly different experiences for students.

Prerequisite: Instructor permission is redundant. The instructor can always waive a prerequisite.

A more appropriate course title and description:

Title: *ENGL 324 –Television Genres*.
Description: *Study of television as a genre from historical beginnings to the contemporary moment. Students will watch television genres and critically analyze them through written reports with an emphasis on form. The department's website has a list of genres offered according to semester and section.*
Typically Offered: Fall, Spring, Summer
Credits: 3
Prerequisite: *ENGL 200*

Sample of a new course with a description that is too long and overly descriptive

Course Title: IMSE 801 - Systems Engineering Fundamentals

Description: *Systems engineering is an interdisciplinary engineering management process used to develop an integrated, life-cycle balanced set of system solutions that satisfy customer needs. This course provides the fundamentals of a systems engineering approach to solving complex engineering systems problems. This course will address systems engineering processes and tools as they relate to the development and life cycle management of complex systems.*

Topics included in the course are analyzing customers' needs, requirements development, systems design, development and integration, developing technical performance measures, system verification, and managing cost, schedule, and risk in engineering tasks. This course is applicable to all engineering disciplines involved with complex engineering systems.

Typically Offered: Fall even years
Credits: 3

Title: The title is fine.

Offerings are well described on a two-year cycle.

Description: The first sentence defines system engineering and should be removed. The description is split into two paragraphs, which is never correct. The final line describes who should take the course and can also be an attempt to recruit students. Such comments are never correct. However, one can provide limited advice, such as this course cannot be used for the MSIE degree.

A more appropriate description is

Description: *This course provides the fundamentals of a systems engineering approach to solve complex engineering systems problems arising during the development and continuing into life cycle management. The course focuses on engineering processes and tools by studying customers' needs, requirement development, system design, integration, technical performance measures, system verification, managing cost, scheduling, and risk.*

Example of a course description that includes syllabus information

Title: ENGL 490 - Development of the English Language.
Credits: 3
Course Description: *Depicts the English language in its place among other world languages and introduces students to the major ways in which English has changed through time. Considers both internal and external influences as causes of language change. The course will be divided into thirds, with thirds covering pre- and Dark Ages, the Renaissance, and pre-World War II.*
Prerequisite: ENGL 200 or 210.
Typically Offered: Fall, Spring

The title describes the course, and the course description aligns with the title. Since the course description discusses how English has changed through time, the Historical Perspective tag appears to be appropriate.

The last sentence is a syllabus-type statement.

An improved description is

Course Description: *Depicts the English language in its place among other world languages and introduces students to the major ways in which English has changed through the Dark Ages, the Renaissance, and pre-World War II. It considers both internal and external influences as causes of language change.*

Curriculum

Curricula should clearly describe the minimum requirements for an individual to achieve the degree. An individual should be able to understand all the requirements to earn the academic credential from reading the curriculum contained in the K-State Catalog. The best curricula do not need an advisor to act as an interpreter, but the advisor helps the students select an appropriate method to complete the requirements for the academic credential.

Many curricula have notes or additional requirements. Additional requirements should be stated prior to the course listings. Frequently, these requirements are listed in paragraph form. Curricula themselves should not dictate the specific order of courses in a schedule. The order of courses should be maintained through the prerequisites.

Contacting and Documenting Impacted Units

Most proposals are delayed in the approval process due to a perceived negative impact upon another unit at K-State. The initiating unit must attempt to determine all impacted units and to contact them directly. The emails and responses, if received, are pasted into the impact field or included as attachments to the proposal. If multiple emails and discussions have occurred, please include that documentation also. Conversations or phone calls are not considered an official method of contacting impacted academic units. However, such conversations can eliminate numerous concerns and are highly encouraged, with follow-up emails sent to confirm the outcome of the conversations.

Two sample emails are below and are based on whether the impact is perceived to be minor or substantial.

Sample email with almost no impact and an invitation to participate

The IMSE department is planning to add IMSE 887 – Stochastic Optimization. Statistics teaches several stochastic classes. The course description and a sample syllabus are attached. We believe that this class is substantially different from any courses you teach. We hope that some of your students will desire to take this class.

If you have any concerns, please let me know. I will happily schedule a meeting to discuss your concerns. If we cannot reach an amicable agreement, then you should contact the chair or co-chairs of the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee. We will then be informed when the course is on their agenda, and we will both be invited to discuss the issues.

Sample email with the potential for substantial impact

The IMSE department is planning to offer IMSE 540 – Statistical Applications in Industrial Engineering. The course description and a syllabus are attached. Currently, STAT 511 is required in IMSE's curriculum. The department faculty have voted to change the STAT 511

requirement in our curriculum to an Advanced Statistical Elective. Students will be able to take STAT 511 or IMSE 540 to fulfill this requirement. We anticipate that many IMSE students will select IMSE 540. However, those students seeking a Statistics minor will still take STAT 511. We don't know the exact impact on your enrollment in STAT 511, but we estimate that between 30 and 40 students will no longer enroll in Stat 511 each year.

If you have any concerns, please let me know. I will happily schedule a meeting to discuss your concerns. If we cannot reach an amicable agreement, then you should contact the chair or co-chairs of the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee. We will then be informed when the course is on their agenda, and we will both be invited to discuss the issue.

Sample Curriculum Map

Animal Sciences and Industry (B.S.) - Business Option

Courses in the department give instruction in selection, breeding, feeding, management, and marketing of beef and dairy cattle, horses, poultry, sheep, swine, and companion animals, as well as instruction in the processing and use of the products these animals provide. There are six options of study to choose from: animal products, bioscience/biotechnology, business, communications, production/management, and science/pre-vet.

In addition to classrooms, office space, and laboratories located in Weber and Call Halls, the department maintains several animal and poultry units within easy access to the campus that house the beef and dairy cattle, horses, swine, sheep, and poultry used for teaching and research.

Bachelor's Degree Requirements

General Courses (20 hours)

ASI 101 - Foundations in Animal Sciences & Industry Credits: 1
BIOL 198 - Principles of Biology Credits: 4
CHM 210 - Chemistry I Credits: 4
COMM 105 - Public Speaking IA Credits: 2
ENGL 100 - Expository Writing I Credits: 3
ENGL 200 - Expository Writing II Credits: 3
MATH 100 - College Algebra Credits: 3

Agriculture

AGEC 120 - Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness Credits: 3
Plus 2 courses from 2 other Agriculture departments-minimum of 5 credit hours. (1 hour courses cannot be applied, cannot use courses from AGEC)

Communications Elective (2-5 hours)

See departmental list

Business & Economics (24 hours)

ACCTG 231 - Accounting for Business Operations Credits: 3
ACCTG 241 - Accounting for Investing and Financing Credits: 3
Business and Economic Electives Minimum 18 hours
See departmental list

Agriculture Electives (8 hours)

AGEC 120 - Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness Credits: 3
Agriculture Electives Minimum 5 hours

See departmental list
Select 2 courses from 2 other agriculture departments NOT from AGEC. (1 hour courses cannot be used)

Mathematics/Statistics/Computers (3 hours)

ASI 290 - Microcomputer Appls in Animal Science Credits: 3
CIS - Any course
MATH 150-799
STAT 325, 340, 350
AGEC 115 - Decision Tools for Ag Economics & AgBus Credits: 2

Humanities/Social Sciences (9 hours)

ECON 110 - Principles of Macroeconomics Credits: 3
Humanities/Social Sciences electives Minimum 6 hrs
See departmental list
Maximum 3 hours from participatory courses. Courses must be taken from at least 2 different departments.

Animal Science Core (42-43 hours)

ASI 102 - Principles of Animal Science Credits: 3
ASI 318 - Fundamentals of Nutrition Credits: 3
ASI 320 - Principles of Feeding Credits: 3
ASI 400 - Farm Animal Reproduction Credits: 3
ASI 500 - Genetics Credits: 3
ASI 533 - Anatomy and Physiology Credits: 4
ASI 580 - Animal Sciences and Industry Career Preparation Credits: 1

Introductory Labs Select 2 courses

ASI 105 - Animal Sciences and Industry Credits: 1
ASI 106 - Dairy and Poultry Science Credits: 1
ASI 107 - Companion Animal and Horse Lab Credits: 1

Animal Products Select 1 course

ASI 350 - Meat Science Credits: 3
ASI 361 - Meat Animal Processing Credits: 2
ASI 405 - Fundamentals of Milk Processing Credits: 3
ASI 640 - Poultry Products Technology Credits: 3
FDSCI 305 - Fundamentals of Food Processing Credits: 3

Animal Management Select 2 courses

ASI 515 - Beef Science Credits: 3
ASI 520 - Companion Animal Management Credits: 3
ASI 521 - Horse Science Credits: 3
ASI 524 - Sheep and Meat Goat Science Credits: 3
ASI 535 - Swine Science Credits: 3
ASI 621 - Dairy Cattle Management Credits: 3
ASI 645 - Poultry Management Credits: 3

Animal Science Electives Minimum of 12 hours

See departmental list
9 hours must be ≥500-level, no more than 6 hours combined from ASI 561, ASI 599 and ASI 661.

Unrestricted Electives (8-12 hours)
Total credit hours required for graduation: (120)