

## **GUIDELINES ON ASSIGNMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE COURSE LEVELS**

Texas A&M University requires that all undergraduate courses have a justification for the course level (i.e., 1XX, 2XX, 3XX, 4XX). This is also an accreditation requirement by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Course level justification can be based on one of two criteria: The first criterion stipulates that a course is a continuation of a sequence of courses where lower-division courses are clear prerequisites for proposed upper-division courses. The second criterion stipulates that the educational expectations (student learning outcomes) are appropriately matched to the proposed course level as determined by the individual College or Program.

If a course has no prerequisites other than student classification, then the course level will be evaluated solely on its ability to meet Criterion 2. **EXCEPTION:** If a program has a clear lower-division vs. upper-division designation of students within a degree program, (e.g., a proposed course that is only available to students admitted to upper-division courses in a particular major), a department/program can satisfy the requirements for Criterion 1 by indicating "Admission to upper division in [insert program or degree name]".

### **Criterion 1: Course Pedigree**

- Prerequisites – if a course requires lower-division courses in order to build upon a chain of knowledge as seen in mathematics, languages, etc., use of a higher course level than the prerequisites is appropriate. If a proposed course expands upon a topic presented in a lower-division course, such as an introductory course, use of a higher course level is appropriate. All catalog prerequisites and concurrent enrollment requirements must be enforced in Compass.
- Classification – Admittance to upper-division classes in a degree plan is an appropriate justification for requesting a course level of 3XX or higher. A prerequisite of junior/senior classification alone is not an appropriate justification for assigning a higher course level.

### **Criterion 2: Course Expectations**

- Course level will be determined by the standards established by each College's Curriculum Committee or appropriate body. These standards, vetted through the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC), are to be applied to new course proposals which do not satisfy Criterion 1.

The UCC will review all new course proposals plus requests for new course numbers, verifying that these criteria are met. If not met, the UCC will return the course proposal to the originating program and request amendment of the proposal to match the criteria. Courses that match Criterion 1 or Criterion 2 will continue in the approval process.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

This policy will be effective beginning September 1, 2017 for all new course proposals. To allow departments and programs sufficient time to review existing course prerequisites before enforcement in Compass is enabled, the policy will be effective beginning September 1, 2018 for all existing courses with justification based on Criterion 1.

## **IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE**

### **Courses submitted under Criterion 1**

Beginning with the September 2017 UCC meeting, the UCC will require that all new course proposals submitted under Criterion 1 adhere to this policy. In addition to documenting prerequisites, new courses requests will be required to include a completed "Enforced Prerequisites" table in the Curricular Approval Request System (CARS).

### **Courses submitted under Criterion 2**

Each college is required to develop a standard for assigning course levels for their respective college before the November 2017 UCC meeting. Subsequent to receiving a college standard but no later than the December 2017 UCC meeting, the UCC will require that all new course proposals submitted under Criterion 2 adhere to the appropriate college standard.

A rubric for assigning course levels developed by the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) is available to serve as a guide for colleges in developing their standards.

### **Prerequisite enforcement**

Departments should begin reviewing existing courses and prerequisites as soon as possible. Departments must create the "Enforced Prerequisites" table in CARS for all existing courses justified using Criterion 1 (i.e., all existing courses with listed course prerequisites). The deadline for completing course prerequisite review is the April 2018 UCC meeting. This will ensure that course prerequisites are enforced when students begin course registration for Fall 2018.