

PROGRAM DESIGN BEST PRACTICES, CONSIDERATIONS, & IMPLEMENTATION TIPS



FOLLOW THE APR CYCLE

Program changes occur following an academic program review (APR) or external program review process. Special permission from the College Curriculum Dean will need to be requested for undergraduate programs who wish to make large-scale changes that occur.

MAKE DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS

Program changes should be driven by data and student needs. CSO can provide you with a data packet that includes types of data such as program enrollment and award data, program completion data, student transfer data, curricular complexity, and labor market data. [Click here for sample data packets!](#)



ALIGN WITH LEARNING OUTCOMES

Ensure that the required courses in a program align to the program student learning outcomes, so that a student is provided opportunities to achieve the outcomes of the program. The required curriculum mapping process can help with this alignment process. [Click here for a template and instructions on how to create a curriculum map!](#)

COMPARE REQUIRED COURSES WITH THE FREQUENCY OF COURSE OFFERINGS

*For existing programs, if a single course is required in a program of study, it is best to ensure the course can be offered each semester.

*If a set of courses must be selected from a list of options, offer the courses on a rotation so that students, regardless of how many courses they have taken from the list, have an option for a course to enroll in. Offering courses on a rotation also helps students to plan on when a course may be offered.



INCLUDE ANY UNIQUE POLICIES

Policies that are unique to a program that are related to admissions, enrollment, and graduation, that are more stringent than University policy, must be included in the catalog description.

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DESIGN SO STUDENTS CAN CHANGE MAJORS



*Use the METRIC dashboard to analyze what majors students had prior to declaring their current program of study. Consider any courses that may overlap between the two majors and how a student may still receive credit for the completion of those courses. Courses may be counted in a Related Studies or Free Elective block of the program. It is recommended that 12 credit hours is reserved for this flexibility in the program.

*No chain of prerequisites for courses that compose a program should take more than 4 semesters to complete so that the time to graduation is not prolonged by completing the required sequence of classes.

BE MINDFUL OF MODALITY

The program modality must be supported with the modality of the required courses.



NAME CHANGES ARE BIG CHANGES



Name changes for majors, minors and certificates will result in all current students who are in the major, minor or certificate to be moved into the new program code with the new name effective fall semester in which the proposal is effective, thereby requiring all students to follow the catalog for the effective term. The department and/or college is responsible for communicating to each student enrolled in the major, minor or certificate of the name change and the effective date of the change.

USE PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Consider the use of Prior Learning Assessments (PLA) to allow students to meet program requirements with credit for experience or previous education not represented on a transcript.



CONSIDER HOW STUDENTS WILL BE IMPACTED



*If courses are being discontinued in a program, consider teaching the courses out for two years and then discontinuing the courses.

*If the credit hours of a required course are being changed, consider making the course variable credit hour in the interim.

*Consider how new courses included in a program may be substituted into an old program of study, or vice versa.

COURSE DESIGN BEST PRACTICES, CONSIDERATIONS, & IMPLEMENTATION TIPS



COURSE OUTCOMES = PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Course learning outcomes should, in part, align to the program learning outcomes.

DESCRIPTIONS SHOULD BE SIMPLE & CONCISE

The course description should be limited to 75 words and highlight the learning outcomes and level of the course. The description should avoid a specific list of topics, and when a list is necessary include the terms “such as” or “may include.”



ONLINE COURSES MUST MEET REQUIREMENTS

When proposing an online course, the online course design must meet the college approved requirements before the course may be scheduled.

Consult your college policies for online course design and approval.

PREREQUISITES ARE FOUNDATIONS

Prerequisites should be used to reinforce skills and content knowledge.



WHEN SHOULD A NEW COURSE BE CREATED?

A new course should be created when performance expectations change. This may include a shift in the focus of the content resulting in a change to the course learning objectives or when the grade mode changes.

LAB HOURS SHOULD BE INCLUDED

When a course incorporates experiential learning, lab hours should be reported to reflect the time spent in the experience.

