

Considerations Involved in Determining What Constitutes a Baccalaureate Level Course

Academic Senate
Of
The California State University
November 7, 1986

Because baccalaureate level coursework is intended to contribute to the student's attainment of the objectives embodied in the baccalaureate degree, courses which are designated as baccalaureate level will meet as one of several standards, the criterion of having a bridging function, helping to move the student from the skills and knowledge expected at entrance toward the competencies expected at graduation.

In areas of the curriculum for which the three segmental Academic Senates have identified expected entry level competencies (e.g., English, mathematics, natural science), baccalaureate courses shall not replicate the skills and knowledge which are entry expectations but will instead require for satisfactory completion the prior attainment of such skills and knowledge. As comparable statements are developed in other areas of the curriculum, reference to entry-level expectations will be useful in helping to define baccalaureate level coursework.

Various graduation expectations, such as those expressed in (1) the goals of general education (2) the objectives of the various majors, (3) the standards for competency, and (4) such generalized expectation as intellectual growth also will influence the judgment as to what constitutes baccalaureate level coursework. Courses designed by qualified faculty to help qualified students move toward the attainment of those expectations will generally be of baccalaureate level. In such courses, faculty judged by their peers to be qualified to teach the courses shall have the determining voice in the decisions as to content, instructional methodology, instructional support resources, and methods and standards for assessing performance. Qualified faculty shall construct and teach baccalaureate course in ways which assure that the level is appropriate for enhancing the knowledge and skills of the adequately prepared student, and appropriate faculty entities shall have primary responsibility for making course level determinations.

Criteria for Determining Baccalaureate Level Courses

The significant elements involved include institutional issues, the course expectations, and the pedagogy employed. Course content alone will not determine acceptability for baccalaureate credit. The criteria are phrased in terms of expectations from each of the parties. These expectations shall not be construed as, by themselves, defining a baccalaureate level course; rather they are designed as aids to the process of making that determination. Thus, they suggest the kinds of considerations that must underlie a determination of course level but they do not define a rigid and objective standard. The use of this document requires informed judgment as to the extent to which the course in question meets the expectations embodied in each of these criteria. These criteria have been developed primarily to guide community college faculty and administrators in determining appropriate baccalaureate course designations, but they should also be useful in university curriculum review processes.

Institutional Issues

- (1) The course is to be taught by a qualified instructor, judged by peers to be competent in the subject matter.
- (2) Qualified faculty, as judged by their peers, shall make the decisions as to course content, instructional methodology, instructional support requirements, and methods and standards for assessing student performance.
- (3) The institution shall provide adequate assessment and advising to ensure that students enrolling in baccalaureate courses are adequately prepared.
- (4) Adequate instructional support resources shall be available to all students who enroll in the course, including facilities, library materials, and access to qualified faculty outside of class meeting times.

Course Expectation

- (1) The course is presented in a manner that requires of students:
 - a. a level of intellect, skill, prior knowledge, and maturity consistent with entry-level collegiate expectations and the stated prerequisite(s), if any for that course;
 - b. learning skills and a vocabulary necessary to master the subject matter of a baccalaureate level course; and
 - c. the capacity to think critically and to understand and apply concepts.
- (2) The course:
 - a. treats subject matter with an intensity and pace that establishes an expectation for significantly greater learner independence than that required at the secondary level; and
 - b. requires the student to continue development of communication skills appropriate or higher education.
- (3) Coursework that:
 - a. enhances understanding of analytical, intellectual, scientific, or cultural concepts and traditions generally shall be considered baccalaureate level.
 - b. enhances understanding of occupational and professional fields usually requiring experience in higher education a prerequisite to employment in such field may be considered baccalaureate level if it includes attention to appropriate theories and concepts.
 - c. provides instruction in occupational fields not usually requiring experience in higher education as prerequisite to such field may be considered baccalaureate level if the primary emphasis is upon understanding the theories and concepts that underlie practice rather than only upon the development of technical skills required for immediate employment.
 - d. is remedial or college preparatory shall not be considered baccalaureate level.

Pedagogy Employed

- (1) There shall be opportunity for student-faculty interaction of a kind and variety commensurate with achievement of course objectives
- (2) The method of evaluation of student performance in courses shall discriminate among levels of attainment as appropriate to both entry and expectations.

(This document was approved by the Academic Senate CSU in May 1987).