

Principles for Developing Families of Courses

Proposed changes to title 5 regulations significantly limit what courses may be deemed repeatable, restricting repeatable courses to three specified categories. In addition, proposed changes limit, with a few exceptions, a student to one enrollment in active participatory courses (formerly referred to as activity courses) in physical education and in visual and performing arts. What has not changed is the number of active participatory courses that students can take if the courses are related in content (commonly referred to as a family of courses). While students will not in most cases be allowed to repeat a specific active participatory course, they can still enroll in a series of active participatory courses that are related in content a maximum of four times.

Activity courses in physical education and in visual and performing arts were previously deemed repeatable as a means for allowing students to “gain an expanded educational experience each time the course is repeated” and to demonstrate that “skills or proficiencies are enhanced by supervised repetition and practice within class periods or that active participation in individual or group assignments is the primary learning activity” (title 5 §55041, existing language). According to the existing language of title 5 §55041, repetitions were limited to three (for a total of four enrollments) for levels in the same activity (e.g. “Beginning Aerobics, Intermediate Aerobics, Advanced Aerobics”) or in variations of the activity (e.g., “Masters Swimming, Distance Swimming, and Swimming for the Triathlete”). These courses were considered “sets” or “families” because they were comprised of a similar activity.

Recently proposed changes to title 5 have altered some of the previous definitions, focusing attention on the curricular need for the course repetition rather than on a broader framework. The term “activity courses” has been deleted from §55041, and courses that were previously designated as repeatable under this definition may no longer be repeatable. However, title 5 §55000 will now define “active participatory courses” as “those courses where individual study or group assignments are the basic means by which learning objectives are obtained.” The same section of title 5 defines “courses that are related in content,” or families, as “those courses with similar primary educational activities in which skill levels or variations are separated into distinct courses with different student learning outcomes for each variation.” Finally, title 5 §55040 will now state that “The policies and procedures adopted by the governing board of each community college district pursuant . . . may not permit student enrollment in active participatory courses, as defined in §55000, in physical education, visual arts or performing arts that are related in content, as defined in §55000, more than four times for semester courses or six times for quarter courses.” Taken together, these definitions and changes make the designation of families a very important curricular issue. The current interpretation of title 5 allows for no more than four levels or experiences within a family such that each course may only be taken one time unless the course meets the new criteria for repeatability under title 5 §55041.

Because, with few exceptions, under the proposed regulations students can only take each of the specified active participatory courses once, many colleges may need to create levels of some of those courses that were previously designated as repeatable and establish those courses as families. While the regulations regarding repeatability and active participatory courses have changed, the instructional justification for creating such courses remains. The spirit of leveling or dividing courses for repetitions has been and should continue to be to provide students with an

opportunity to build their knowledge, skills, abilities, and fitness levels in physical activity courses within a set or family. The need to develop leveled or distinct courses should be founded on these principles and should be done to ensure programmatic needs are met, where appropriate.

The primary drawback to creating leveled courses or to separating out distinct materials or technologies is that scheduling these more specialized courses and meeting local minimum enrollment requirements may pose difficulties. When local colleges create multiple courses or course levels, the courses may be offered simultaneously rather than scheduled separately, with the enrollment across all sections being counted together for minimum or maximum enrollment considerations, FTES computation, and teaching load. For example, a local college may create a Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Ceramics course sequence (CERM 100, 101, 102 for this example). CERM 100, 101, and 102 can then all be scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 to 12 with the same instructor.

A variation on leveling is to create courses with a more specific focus within an area of emphasis. For example, some colleges may split painting up into oil, acrylic, and watercolor courses or separate out relief printmaking from intaglio, lithography, or screen-printing. There are both curricular and pedagogical justifications for this approach. The primary concern with this approach is that receiving institutions (UC and CSU in particular) typically do not break up the curriculum in this way. Most schools in the CSU or UC systems only require one or two courses in any given medium for major transfer preparation. Local faculty should work closely with their articulation officers to assess the potential impact of this approach on students preparing to transfer.

At this time, individual colleges or districts may define specific families of courses as they choose. However, local curriculum committees are encouraged to be conservative in making such decisions. If colleges begin to define families of courses in unreasonably narrow ways, they can expect more changes to title 5 that might take away the right to make such decisions locally. The definition of “courses that are related in content” is not intended to be so narrow that it becomes inhibiting or useless, but neither is it intended to allow colleges to proliferate levels and active participatory courses by turning every course in the curriculum into a family.

Below are some examples of level development within a family and groupings where variations of an activity could comprise a family. These family divisions are not intended to be authoritative or absolute; again, the determination of family groups remains a local decision. Rather, the chart below is simply intended to demonstrate how families of courses might be organized.

Family Group	Possible Level Names or Distinct but Related Courses			
Tennis	Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced Intermediate	Advanced
	OR			
	Tennis 1	Tennis 2	Tennis 3	Tennis 4
Golf	Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficient
Swimming	Swimming 1	Swimming 2	Swimming 3	Swimming 4
	OR			
	Beginning Swimming	Masters Swimming	Distance Swimming	Swimming for the Triathlete
Jazz Dance	Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced Intermediate	Advanced
Modern Dance	Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced Intermediate	Advanced
Ballet	Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced Intermediate	Advanced
Resistance Training	Weight Training	Circuit Weight Training	Power Sculpting	
Yoga	Beginning	Basic	Advanced	
Theater Performance	Comedy Ensemble	Comedy Supporting Role	Comedy Starring Role	Tragedy Ensemble
	Tragedy Supporting Role	Tragedy Starring Role	Classical Ensemble	Classical Supporting Role
	Classical Starring Role	Modern Ensemble Role	Modern Supporting Role	Modern Starring Role
Musical Theater	Ensemble	Supporting	Starring	
Visual Art Fundamentals	2-D Design	3-D Design	Color Theory	
Painting	Introduction to Painting	Intermediate Painting	Figure Painting	Watercolor Painting
Sculpture	Introduction to Sculpture	Intermediate Sculpture	Ceramic Sculpture	Figure Sculpture