How does the course approval process work?

Proposals for new and revised courses are reviewed at the college level by the CAS Curriculum Committee (CASCC) and at the university level by the UO Committee on Courses (UOCC).

The CASCC is composed of two tenured faculty members from each of the three CAS divisions, one of whom acts as chair. (The CASCC also reviews new and revised degree programs—majors, minors, and certificates—and passes its recommendations first to the CAS Deans and then to the Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council, as appropriate.)

To review course proposals, the CASCC and UOCC need both a syllabus and the information captured by the online Course Inventory Management (CIM) form. This review has five principal aims:

1. To verify the department’s sponsorship of the course as fitting into its curriculum.
2. To ensure that courses don’t overlap or compete unnecessarily with one another.
3. To evaluate the syllabus for clarity and completeness, mainly by adopting a student’s perspective.
4. To ensure that the number of credits a course carries reflects the workload it requires. This is required by our accreditors and, ultimately, by federal policy.
5. To determine whether an undergraduate course can count for a special curricular status:
   a. General Education group-satisfying
   b. General Education multicultural
   c. Honors (“H” after course number on transcript—not Honors College)
   d. Second language for B.A. degree
   e. Math/computer science for B.S. degree

Here are guidelines for addressing each of these areas:

1. Secure departmental sponsorship: Each department has its own local process to develop and screen new course proposals. This is important because, while instructors write syllabi, departments own courses and both schedule and assign instructors to them. College and university committees mainly want to understand the rationale and context for a new course—how it fits into a department or program curriculum—and verify that the sponsoring department is committed to offering it sustainably.

2. Course overlap: Search the UO course catalog to see if your course might overlap or compete with others. If it does, you’ll need to produce emails showing that your department—and not just you, the instructor—has conferred with its counterpart(s). You’ll need to share a draft syllabus when you do. The curriculum committees expect instructors and departments to work through any disagreements collegially. In most cases, departments are quite happy to learn of and promote complementary course offerings in other departments.

3. Prepare your syllabus: Consult the “CAS Syllabus Checklist” and follow its instructions carefully as you write a new syllabus or update an existing one. Provide the information required in the order indicated, and with the expected level of detail. All this will make life easier for your colleagues on the curriculum committees as they pore over the numerous course proposals under review each term. Everyone understands that instructors revise and rearrange their syllabi when they actually teach a course, but the version you submit needs to be authentic and complete.

4. Request the appropriate number of credits: Per federal policy, one undergraduate credit hour equals 30 real hours of student work, typically 10 hours in class and 20 hours outside of class. For graduate students, it’s 40 hours per credit. The Student Engagement Inventory (SEI) on the CIM form allows you to estimate the amount of time students spend on various course activities, including class attendance, reading, writing, problem sets, exam preparation, etc. Reviewers spot-check the workload expectations on your actual syllabus against the SEI. **NOTE** Special rules apply to online/hybrid courses that meet in person for less than 1 hour per credit per week. Guidelines on such courses can be found at [THIS LINK](#).

5. Check criteria for special curricular status, if applicable: If you want your course to count for a special curricular status, familiarize yourself with the applicable rules and policies, and submit a justification(s) on the CIM form. Make
sure that the course description given on your syllabus provides a detailed explanation of precisely how the course addresses the criteria specified. Rules and policies on special status courses can be found at THIS LINK (for group-satisfying and multicultural courses) or THIS LINK (for honors courses). Contact the CAS curriculum coordinator with questions about second language (B.A.) or math/computer science (B.S.) courses.