

A-G Interactive Guide

A Project of the Admissions and Articulation Subcommittee of the Educational Issues and Practices Committee of the Governor's School-to-Career Advisory Council
Conducted Under the Auspices of the UCOP Office of Undergraduate Admissions

PROJECT OVERVIEW

HISTORY:

The Educational Issues & Practices Sub-committee on Admissions and Articulation has its origins in a statewide survey conducted in early 1998 by the School-to-Career (STC) Interagency Partners. From the field, there was a consistently articulated concern about the impact of UC A-G certification requirements on the adoption of innovative STC courses and programs. After an initial mid-year planning meeting in Burlingame, the ad hoc subcommittee was formed and two meetings were held. After considerable discussion of the existing intersegmental articulation system in relation to School-to-Career implementation issues, the subcommittee formed a work group to develop a comprehensive proposal to address short term and long term intersegmental articulation problems.

The work group identified and prioritized five distinct articulation improvement strategies. The highest priority was the development of a printed "Guide to A-G Course Certification" and an accompanying web-based, interactive course articulation information system.

GOALS:

The goal of this project is to improve the information available to K–12 practitioners about course certification requirements and procedures, creating an electronic/automated system to disseminate design information about innovative STC courses, and improving feedback to teachers regarding proposed courses. Intersegmental faculty teams would be convened to improve and enhance the description of course standards in A-G disciplines and to review and develop certification standards and strategies for innovative courses.

NEED:

Responding to global economic trends and rapid technological evolution, the School-to-Career (STC) educational reform initiative is premised on two core goals: (1) all K–12 students need curriculum which is more relevant; (2) all K–12 students need curriculum which is more rigorous. STC further posits that a key strategy to accomplish these two central goals is to increase the career-related content of K–12 curriculum. Innovative teachers are modifying courses and programs to increase the coherence, relevancy, and rigor of the curriculum by adopting career themes around which curriculum is designed.

At the same time, UC A-G certification of courses remains central to the validation and legitimation of new and modified courses. The A-G certification process is the single most significant factor regulating the creation and adoption of innovative STC curriculum.

Teacher- and administrator-practitioners report that the course certification process itself lacks sufficient clarity. Practitioners report that approval criteria are difficult to understand; that standards of rigor, breadth, and acceptable content are not clearly enough detailed; and that the certification process lacks sufficient feedback mechanisms to ensure positive results. It is also reported that teachers sometimes receive partial or fragmented information on course development guidelines.

OUTCOMES:

Creation of a detailed course certification guide and web-based, interactive, information system would obtain several results:

- Course standards would be made transparent for practitioners
- Publication and wide dissemination of the guide would enhance its use and stimulate course and program innovation;
- A web-based interactive system will significantly improve information flow to practitioners on new course designs and feedback on proposed courses;
- An electronic system will provide wide access to innovative course outlines so that individual teachers could spend substantially less time reinventing curricular innovations;
- An electronic version of the guide will allow for its regular update and broad dissemination to practitioners.

PROCESS & CONTENT:

The Guide will be developed collaboratively with input from intended audience: high school teachers, counselors, district and site administrators, and STC partners. Post-secondary faculty panels from relevant disciplines will be convened to discuss and review standards, content priorities, and related matters. Faculty will develop informative guidelines for the type of innovative courses that are now appearing and would identify standards for such courses.

The U.C. Office of the President has established a web-based record of A-G certified courses listed by schools and districts. This system will be expanded to include innovative course outlines and author contact information, indexed to allow searches by discipline. Interactive “chat rooms” will be established to permit questions and dialogue on relevant issues including course design, standards, etc. A protocol will be established to permit electronic submittal of new course outlines for comments, suggestions, and general feedback from U.C. officials. An electronic version of the Guide will also be posted.

The Guide (both printed and electronic versions) will contain the following components:

- I. Introduction
- II. Description of the course review process, including recommended format for course outlines, description of reasons for course rejection, and description of process for obtaining feedback on proposed new courses

- III. Identification and description of standards of rigor and discipline criteria, including definition and description of the organization of A-G disciplines; detailed description of design strategies to obtain approval for non-traditional, innovative courses; sample course outlines and descriptions (especially innovative and/or non-traditional), and an explanation of why or why not a sample course was approved for a particular category
- IV. Appendix of approved innovative course outlines

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND STAFF:

Roman Stearns has been selected to direct this project. For over three years, Roman has worked with EASTBAY Learns, one of the leading School-to-Career partnerships in the State. In fact, the conceptualization of this project came from discussions held among members of the EASTBAY Learns Steering Committee. Roman brings to this project an advanced understanding of the K-12 education system. He has been involved in several regional and state committees, and is respected by STC practitioners around the State.

The project will be housed at the U.C. Office of the President (U.C.O.P.) in Oakland. Carla Ferri, Director of Undergraduate Admissions, UCOP, will provide direct supervision to project staff, and will serve as the single point of contact for the fiscal agent.

The Admissions & Articulation sub-committee of the Educational Issues & Practices committee will serve in an advisory capacity for the project. As requested, project updates will be provided to the Educational Issues & Practices Committee of the Governor's STC Advisory Council.