

FAQ for Faculty submitting proposals for Certification in the new Baccalaureate Program

Modified from documents prepared by the BRC Initial Certification Subcommittees for Area B and Upper Division General Education

Questions for all baccalaureate requirements

Q: What can I read to help me prepare?

A: We hope this FAQ sheet will help with GE Certification. This document can also be found on the Undergraduate Studies GE website: <http://ugs.sfsu.edu/curriculum/GE>. You can consult accepted proposals through the link on the GE submission page after logging in, or by clicking the faculty login link on the lower right hand side of the site listed above. Please look through a variety of proposals. Although we strive for consistency of review, the committee memberships change through time and that has an impact on the exact details of the courses that are approved.

Q: Once I'm ready, where do I go to fill out the form?

A: Go to <https://courseproposal.sfsu.edu> and enter your SFSU ID and password. You can also find a link to the form on the GE website.

Q: Can I have a proposal for a new or revised course reviewed by CRC at the same time as it is reviewed for a baccalaureate requirement?

A: No. Any new or revised course must be approved by the curriculum office (typically through CRC) before it can be forwarded to the Lower or Upper Division certification committee.

Q: Can I construct my proposal in a word processing program then import it into the form?

A: No, although we highly recommend that you prepare your proposal in a word processor then copy and paste it into the submission form. Keep in mind that the boxes in the form can be expanded by clicking and dragging on the lower right corner of each box. This can make editing easier.

Q: What should I put in the course outline section? Can't I just attach a syllabus?

A: Unfortunately there is no mechanism to upload a syllabus. Although you can attach one to the print copy of your form, the materials for review are distributed electronically, and if an electronic version is not available, the committee will not receive it. If you want to attach a syllabus, please contact the GE Director to make arrangements for it to be included in the review packet. Please note, however, that the committees are not obligated to include the syllabus in their review.

A course outline that provides a chronological sequence of topical coverage and indicates roughly how much of the course each topic occupies, together with information (in the outline or in the SLO

narratives, for example) about how assignments, other instructional activities, and exams articulate with the sequence of topics, can help reviewers place each SLO in the larger context of the course. This can help make SLO narratives more persuasive.

Q: How do the course expectations differ from SLOs?

A: The "Course Expectations" portion of the proposal contain details about the course itself (required content, upper or lower division restrictions, rules on enrollment and prerequisites etc.). These are either present in the course or they aren't. When the course is submitted for recertification (see below) the presence of these requirements in the course will be checked. For now, you are required to check the box certifying that your course meets the expectations, and if it isn't obvious from your proposal that they do, you may need to provide some explanation as to how the course meets the expectations.

Q: Do I have to discuss all parts of an SLO? Some have two or three distinct sections.

A: Yes. Unless a Student Learning Outcome includes the word "or," the committee interprets them as "and" statements. Please address each part of each SLO explicitly. The easiest way to do this is to cite the specific assignments that pertain to each point and to also explicitly describe *how* the students will meet the SLO through these assignments. For examples, see below and also consult the approved proposals mentioned above.

Q: How much detail should I include in the SLO boxes?

A: For each Student Learning Object (SLO), the proposal should offer a brief narrative, written to persuade the reviewers that students completing the course can achieve the SLO. The language of the narrative should be understandable by faculty members outside the proposer's discipline. It must necessarily avoid jargon. (Ideally, the language would be understandable to students, because they should understand both the SLOs and how the course is helping them meet them.) A short paragraph or two is enough to address many (most?) SLOs, though some complex SLOs might require more attention. Here are some elements that should be in your narrative:

- 1) Identify and, if necessary, briefly describe one or more instructional strategies that can help students "acquire the information and skills needed" to meet each articulated facet of the SLO. (Some SLOs have multiple facets.)
- 2) For each facet, cite a specific, concrete example of how the course will address that facet. (Simple assertion that the SLO will be addressed in the course, however often, will not persuade.)
- 3) If necessary (but only if necessary), include carefully selected course materials that illustrate or support the argument compellingly.
- 4) Identify how the instructor will tell whether or not each student has met the SLO (i.e., assessment mechanism).

Q: Should I talk about the content of my lectures?

A: Probably not. The SLOs focus on what students will learn and how they will demonstrate that learning has occurred, not what faculty members say in class. In the "assignments/activities" sections of the proposal, please describe *how* students will *demonstrate* what they have learned. If, however, describing lectures helps to explain how the lectures inform student activities, please do describe them. The modified language in the submission form clarifies this by stating: "Describe the assignment(s)/activities(s) through which students will demonstrate that they have acquired the information, and developed the necessary skills, to meet this student learning outcome."

Q: How do I submit a new proposal?

A: Once you have completed your proposal, please print it out and have it signed by your department chair. They will forward it to the Associate Dean, who will sign and forward to the Curriculum Office.

Upper Division GE questions

Q: What if my current course does not include a research component?

A: Upper Division SLO 4 demands that students go beyond the materials supplied to them by the instructor and that library sources (digital sources are fine) be included among the sources they acquire. If your course does not currently include such an assignment, you will have to change the assignments in order to meet this SLO.

Q: Can you give some advice on particular SLOs?

A: Yes, we have given a couple of specific examples below with the hope that the examples will be broadly applicable to other SLOs. Also note that the Q and A directly above applies to SLO 4.

Example, SLO 5. The SLO reads (for Humanities), "analyze social issues as well as ethical dilemmas and choices that arise out of artistic or humanistic research, discoveries, and applications."

The committee would like to see an explanation of how students discuss or write about (or do some other activity that engages with) the ways in which artists or scholars create things that raise ethical dilemmas or social issues. The students should then be discussing/writing about those social issues and ethical dilemmas. For example, dance choreography that incorporates elements of African as well as European traditions and is performed by white dancers might raise ethical issues about cultural appropriation and might reflect social issues having to do with the unequal power between black and white artists in the US.

Example, SLO 6. The SLO reads (for Humanities), “analyze multiple forms and variations of human diversity found in aesthetic experiences, expressive forms, belief systems, or communicative practices, and apply that knowledge to their own lives and to ways in which they could contribute purposefully to the well-being of their local communities, their nations, and the people of the world; to social justice; and/or to the sustainability of the natural environment.”

This is a difficult SLO to address because it has so many parts. You may need to add a new assignment or part of an assignment to get students to

- “analyze multiple forms and variations of human diversity”
- “apply that knowledge to their own lives”
- “apply that knowledge . . . to ways in which they could contribute purposefully to the well-being of their local communities, their nations, and the people of the world”
- and/or “apply that knowledge . . . to social justice”
- and/or “apply that knowledge . . . to the sustainability of the natural environment.”

Example, Topical Perspective, Environmental Connections. The SLO reads, “Describe interconnections among humans and other aspects of the natural world, as well as their responsibility to work toward the sustainability of the natural environment, and as a result, increase the health and well-being of human societies.”

The easiest way to answer this topical perspective is to cite the specific assignments that pertain to each point and to also explicitly describe how the assignments meet each point. Specifically, what assignments or aspects of your assignments reflect your students’ ability to

- “describe interconnections between humans”?
- AND “describe . . . other aspects of the natural world”? How?
- AND “illustrate their responsibility to work towards sustaining the natural environment”?
- AND “as a result, increase the health and well-being of human societies”?

Example, Topical Perspective, Ethical Reasoning and Action: The SLO reads, “Discern and analyze ethical issues, evaluate decisions and actions that have ethical implications, and reflect seriously on the motives of their conduct in the personal and public arenas.”

What assignments require that your students

- “discern and analyze ethical issues”?
- AND “evaluate decisions and actions that have ethical implications”? How does the assignment accomplish this?

How do the students

- “reflect seriously on the motives of their conduct in the private arena”?
- “reflect seriously on the motives of their conduct in the public arena”?

REVISIONS TO SUBMITTED PROPOSALS

Q: What happens if I need to revise my proposal?

A: After you receive the notification that revisions are being requested, the comments from the committee will be sent to you. In general, they will take the form of notes and highlights on a PDF copy of your proposal. Please allow two weeks for comments to arrive.

Q: How do I submit a revision to an already reviewed proposal?

A: Once you have completed your revisions, please create a PDF copy of the proposal. Depending on the instructions from your department chair and Associate Dean, you will either route the proposal through them or send it directly to the GE Director at baccreqs@sfsu.edu. Make clear what certifications the revisions are being submitted in response to. Please do not send print copies of proposals, as it creates confusion as to whether it is being submitted for a new certification or is a revision of an old certification.

Q: What do I do if I no longer want to pursue a certification?

A: If you decide after receiving comments from the LDCC or UDCC you no longer wish to pursue a certification, please notify the GE Director at baccreqs@sfsu.edu. We can adjust our records and if your certifications are complete, post the proposal on the web.

Q: How many times can I revise a proposal?

A: There are no limits on the number of times a proposal can be revised and resubmitted. As long as you are working with the committee to make the revisions, and both you and the committee feel progress is being made, then you may continue to revise.

Q: What if I don't agree with the comments from the committee and don't feel I need to revise my proposal?

A: If you are unwilling to make the revisions a committee has requested, and feel the course should be certified as is, you may appeal the committee's decision to BRC. Be prepared to provide evidence to support your argument that the course should be certified as it is and that the committee's request is unreasonable.

ONCE YOUR COURSE IS APPROVED

Q: When does my certification take effect?

A: In the notification, you will be told the start date for your certification. Students taking the course prior to the start date cannot use it to fulfill the requirement(s).

Q: If my course is already certified in the new program, how do I add additional certifications?

A: You should prepare a new proposal for the new certifications. That way there is no confusion about what you are applying for. You can copy and paste the course information from the old proposal.

Q: Should I delete my online proposal once it has been approved?

A: Please do not delete the final proposal. You may, and should, delete any incomplete proposals.

Q: For how long is a course certification good?

A: At this point we don't know when the recertification process for any particular course will occur. You can expect between two to five years between the certification start date and the notice of recertification. There will be a rotating schedule of recertification, in which faculty will be asked to produce evidence that students in their course are meeting the student learning outcomes for the areas in which the course is certified. Courses that haven't been offered, or provide no evidence of student achievement of the outcomes, will have their certification revoked.

Q: What kind of assessment data will I be asked to provide during the recertification process?

A: You will decide what type of evidence you want to present that students are meeting the outcomes for your areas of certification. Be thinking about this as you teach your course in the next couple of years. Try to gather evidence as you go.

Q: Can I make changes to my course after it has been certified?

A: Yes. The proposals that you prepare for certification are meant to provide evidence that your students are **likely** to be able to meet the SLOs. Once you begin teaching the course you may find that students are not meeting one or more of the outcomes, in which case we highly recommend that you change your course accordingly. Your original proposal will not be used in the recertification process.

Q: How often do I need to offer my course to keep its certification(s)?

A: There is no set amount of time in policy as there was in the old program. However since you will be asked to provide assessment data during the recertification process, if your course has not been taught, you will not be able to assess its effectiveness. That will endanger your certification(s).