

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR NEW COURSE PROPOSALS

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### OVERVIEW

Clark is a small research university that values liberal education. We aspire to help our students build a love of learning, a respect for inquiry and imagination, and a spirit of engagement with the world in all its diversity and complexity. Education at Clark is a developmental and socially situated process that engages students actively in the discovery and creation of knowledge. The Undergraduate Academic Board (UAB) and the Graduate Board work with the Dean of the College, all graduate deans and directors, and the Provost to ensure that the curriculum offers ample opportunities for students to achieve these aspirations. This work includes reviewing and approving new courses each semester.

New courses further the goals outlined in our Strategic and Academic Frameworks, and faculty is encouraged to develop and offer new courses that will enrich the curriculum and the students' intellectual experiences. Furthermore, all course offerings must meet NECHE (New England Commission of Higher Education) expectations and guidelines. The specific components of this course proposal are designed to help guide the development of courses that support all of these objectives.

## PROCESS

**DEADLINE FOR NEW COURSE PROPOSALS:** Please see accompanying announcement for this cycle's deadlines or email [Dean@clarku.edu](mailto:Dean@clarku.edu) or [UAB@clarku.edu](mailto:UAB@clarku.edu).

**STEP 1:** Fill out a new **NEW COURSE PROPOSAL FORM** (available on UAB's webpage).

**STEP 2:** Provide a **SYLLABUS** for the proposed course (see section below on required elements).

**STEP 3:** Submit the NEW COURSE PROPOSAL FORM and the SYLLABUS via **ACALOG** for review.

New course proposals are reviewed twice a year and must be approved prior to course registration for the next semester (i.e., mid-September for spring courses, mid-February for summer and fall courses). Consequently, due dates are firm.

All new undergraduate courses will be reviewed by UAB and the Dean of the College. All new graduate courses will be reviewed by the appropriate Dean: Dean of SPS for SPS courses, Director of IDCE for IDCE courses, Dean of SPS for SPS courses, and Dean of Research and Graduate Studies for Arts and Sciences Courses.

## REQUIRED SYLLABUS ELEMENTS FOR NEW COURSE PROPOSALS

The following elements must be included in your submitted syllabus for review. These elements are not only relevant to the course creation process, they are important information that should be included in the syllabus each semester. (\*You don't have to fill in the information here. Simply include them in the proposed syllabus.)

For descriptions of the **LEEP course categories** (FYI, PLS, D&I, PoP, and Capstone), see the Academic Catalog [here](#).

### **Course Overview**

A brief broad description of how this course fits with the other offerings of your department and the University. For example, is it an introductory-level course that is appropriate for students from many majors? Is it an intermediate-level course that is on the path of majors/minors in your department or other departments? Is it an upper-level course that is specific to majors and/or graduate students in your department? Does it connect to interdepartmental programs within the university? Essentially, who is the target audience?

### **Course Content**

A list of the major topics to be covered in this course. This list may take the form of a day-by-day or week-by-week list of topics, but UAB does not require that level of specificity to approve the course proposal. A simple list of the topics is sufficient,

especially since it sometimes takes a couple iterations of teaching the course to finalize a successful day-by-day plan.

### **Broad Learning Objectives**

Not just a re-statement of the course content. Rather, a list of some broadly useful skills that students should develop by taking this course. How does this course help them to develop these skills? How do these skills relate to Clark's university-wide learning objectives?

### **Course Attribute Descriptions (if applicable)**

If this course will carry any university-wide attributes (PLS, D&I, PoP, Capstone), a couple sentences describing how the content/activities/etc. of this course support each of those attributes. If the intention is for this course to be taught as a First Year Intensive (FYI), a brief description of how the course's structure and content match with the goals for FYI courses.

### **Undergrad / Grad Distinction (if applicable)**

If this course is a combined graduate-level (300) & undergraduate-level (200) course, a description of how these two courses differ from each other. Vague statements about the graduate-level course being "more rigorous" or about "higher quality work" being expected from graduate students are not sufficient. Be specific and build these differences into the course assignments themselves.

### **Engaged Hours**

Regular 1-unit courses are expected to include a minimum of 180 hours of engaged academic time over the course of the semester. (For courses that are offered for 0.5 units, etc. the expectations are adjusted proportionally.) Please make clear through a simple table how the activities of the course connect to the hour expectations of the course; how much time should students expect to spend on which course activities? In addition to being required for University accreditation, the University also believes that clarity around this expectation helps maintain a level of academic rigor that is appropriate for the undergraduate program at Clark. Thinking about these hour expectations will help faculty to calibrate the amount of work (and therefore the overall rigor) that is included in a course. Additionally, the table will help illustrate to students the amount of effort that is expected from them. It is not sufficient to simply say that in-class time is X hours and therefore students should be putting 180-X hours of effort into work outside of class time.

### **Required Activities (if applicable)**

If the course requires students to participate in any off-campus trips or any activities outside of the regular course meeting times, list the specific activities including date/time requirements and monetary cost requirements if any.

### **Grade Calculations**

A clear and transparent description of how grades are determined. How do the assignments, course activities, and exams generate a student's grade? This process

may involve a specific number-to-letter conversion chart, but the University does not require or endorse any specific version of that chart. Instead, the university uses qualitative descriptions to indicate what each letter-grade represents. These descriptions can be found in the academic catalog.

### **Other syllabus components**

Many professors choose to include in their syllabus text from (or links to) various university policies such as those relating to plagiarism, Title IX, Responsible Employee descriptions, Student Accessibilities Services, etc. UAB leaves these decisions to the discretion of the professor. In some cases, a policy may be very relevant to a course, and therefore it may make sense to describe in the syllabus how the policy connects to the course.

## **CHANGES TO EXISTING COURSES**

Minor changes to existing courses—e.g., description, designation, title, course number, unit value, etc.— for the next academic year are evaluated each semester by the registrar, who reserves the right to forward any requests to UAB or Graduate Board for additional consideration. Changes to PLS, DI, or PoP designations will be reviewed by UAB. The "Change to an Existing Course" form can be found online through the ClarkYou portal and on UAB's website.

Clark uses the Acalog system to review completed course proposals and to communicate with faculty/chairs/program directors regarding any questions. Acalog is the online management system for the academic catalog, managed by the Registrar's Office. Each department has an assigned Acalog editor, usually the departmental administrative assistant. This editor must enter academic catalog changes to the Acalog system, including requests for new course approval.

## **A SPECIAL NOTE ON CLARK COMMONS COURSES**

We are continuing to pilot undergraduate **Clark Commons** courses for the 2022-2023 academic year. Clark Commons courses are **team-taught, interdisciplinary, and ideally intersectional**, and foster Clark's commitment to interdisciplinary study and respond to current big topics. These courses are designed to:

- Capture the distinctness of Clark's approach to education: addressing significant problems that cross disciplines
- Amplify curricular diversification and anti-racist curricular initiatives
- Facilitate faculty—and student—interaction and collaboration

The courses should include the following elements and considerations:

- One or two faculty member(s) should be the head instructor(s), who organize the course and shepherd the students through it (e.g., one head instructor could be "student facing," while the other could be focused on organizing the faculty and content of the course);

- Course content will be provided by a collection of faculty, each providing a small portion of the course from their own area of expertise
- All the sections of content should be threaded into an overarching theme, and the head instructors should help the students to see how the individual pieces connect together into the broader picture.
- Account for hiring TAs to run 20-student sections and to help manage course operations
- Clearly define target student audience: 000-, 100-, or 200-level; survey/lecture or advanced seminar
- We strongly recommend offering these new courses at .5 unit, pass/fail, and at the 000 or 100 level.

If you would like to develop a Clark Commons course, please contact the Dean of the College for templates, resources, and funding information.

### Addendum: Courses that Incorporate Extracurricular Activities

Clark does not give academic credit for participation in extracurricular activities. Courses that include participation in an activity, however, may be created in accordance with the guidelines below. These guidelines were developed through discussion with faculty who currently teach such courses.

Courses must be created and supported by an academic department or program and must be taught by a paid faculty member (full time or otherwise) of that program.

Students in the course must meet regularly with the course instructor (roughly proportional to the standard 3 hours per week for a full 1-unit course).

Beyond just doing an activity, the course must include learning about the academic content of that activity (such as learning about the current political science topics that are relevant to the model UN debate topics, or learning about the music pieces to be played, the genres they represent, and how to become a better performer of these pieces and genres).

The student's effort must meet the minimum engaged academic hours expectation, with an emphasis on the "academic" so as to distinguish this work from, for example, an athlete working hard to get better at a sport.

The course should be graded analogously to other courses at Clark. The course syllabus should clearly define the course's learning outcomes, how students will be assessed on these outcomes, and how those assessments will translate into grades. Participation on its own is not a sufficient objective for the course. Instead, the objectives must focus on the academic content of the course.

If students are permitted to take the course multiple times, there should be clearly articulated learning objectives for iterations beyond the first. There should be a purposefully selected maximum amount of credit that can be earned from this course.

Required activities outside of the scheduled meeting times should be included in the course description.