
SDSU Topics Courses (296, 496, 596, 696, Latin American Studies 580, Psychology 796, 886) General Studies Courses

(Policy adopted by the Senate, April 1976;
Revised October 1981, November 1985, May 1988)

Policies and Procedures

The Undergraduate Topics Committee, which is a subcommittee of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, is responsible for the review and approval of all courses numbered 296, 496, or 596, Latin American Studies 580, Psychology 796, 886, and General Studies courses offered for academic credit during the regular academic year, special sessions (i.e., summer term sessions), and in Extension. In addition, all 500-level and 696 courses are reviewed by the Graduate Topics Committee. Policy regarding 696 topics courses was approved by Graduate Council on March 21, 1985.

On February 4, 2016, the university curriculum committees and Graduate Council approved a policy requiring a syllabus for all topics course proposals.

In September 1988, the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee approved the following procedure for review of topics courses:

1. The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee delegates full authority for the approval of undergraduate topics courses to the Undergraduate Topics Subcommittee.
2. The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee will act on undergraduate topics only upon petition of a member of the topics subcommittee.
3. The Undergraduate Topics Subcommittee will provide the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee with a complete list of their actions by the end of each semester.

In order to allow adequate time for the university-wide review of proposed topics courses (296, 496, 596, 696, Latin American Studies 580, Psychology 796, 886) and General Studies courses, proposals must be submitted to Curriculum Services according to the deadline set for receipt of class schedule forms. Courses offered in summer term sessions, and Extension are submitted to the College of Extended Studies for forwarding to Curriculum Services. The proposal forms (including course outlines and syllabus) should be forwarded with the approval of the appropriate college curricular review committee and the dean of the college.

When reviewing topics courses, the college curricular review committee should pay particular attention to the following:

1. Is level of course appropriate, i.e., lower division, upper division acceptable for graduate credit?
2. Are appropriate prerequisites listed?
3. Is course description clear and brief?
4. Is mode of instruction appropriate, i.e., breakdown into lecture, lab, activity?
5. Is grading method appropriate?
6. For short-term courses, will students have adequate time for out-of-class preparation and study, i.e., is time frame for course appropriate?

General Studies Courses were created to provide a means for departments to offer innovative and/or interdisciplinary undergraduate courses which do not fit into the existing curricular framework. These courses differ from topics courses in that they may be interdisciplinary, may utilize variable credit, and/or may incorporate real departures from usual teaching and learning techniques. Under certain circumstances, General Studies 250 and 350 may be used to propose courses for General Education credit on a temporary basis.

General Studies courses may be offered for a maximum of four semesters (subject to review by the Committee each semester). Since approval by the Committee is only temporary, it is anticipated that if a course proves successful, the department would initiate the usual procedures for obtaining curricular committee approval for a permanent new course. Also, Committee approval in no way guarantees approval of course load for the faculty member. This must still be arranged by the department and the college.

According to Senate policy, proposals for experimental and interdisciplinary limited-duration courses will go through the same procedural steps as regular undergraduate curricular proposals with the following exceptions:

1. Proposals will not be constrained by catalog and committee deadlines for regular course proposals; they will be dealt with on demand and must be completely processed during one semester for implementation for the next semester.
2. The process will normally conclude with the work of the Undergraduate Topics Committee, which will make an information report to the Senate annually.

Topics Courses (296, 496, 596, 696, Latin American Studies 580, Psychology 796, 886) are defined as “those courses which treat unspecified topics within a discipline, e.g., Business Administration 496: Selected Topics in Business Administration.” (Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Sixth Report to Senate, November 1979.)

With regard to regular university topics courses, any department or college which has received approval through the normal curricular channels to offer courses under the numbers 296, 496, 596, 696, Latin American Studies 580, Psychology 796, 886, may do so subject to the following conditions:

1. Proposals require the approval of:
 - Department
 - College Curriculum Committee
 - College Dean
 - Undergraduate Topics Committee
 - Graduate Topics Committee (500-level and 696 courses only)
2. A syllabus is required (per university curriculum committees and Graduate Council, February 4, 2016).
3. Such courses may be offered no more than four semesters with the same title and content. (However, if a proposal has been submitted to the college or university curricular committees to create a permanent course, departments will be granted an extension beyond the four semesters to allow time for processing of the request for inclusion in the catalog.)
4. No more than nine units of 296, 496, 596 courses shall be applicable toward a bachelor's degree.
5. Such courses may be applicable toward preparation for the major only with the approval of the department chair.
6. No more than six units of 696 courses shall be applicable toward a master's degree.
7. Only those proposals submitted to Curriculum Services in time for inclusion in the Class Schedule will be approved.
8. Specified courses may be offered on a credit/no credit basis under the following conditions:
 - a. Requests to offer these courses for Cr/NC must be indicated on proposal.
 - b. Separate sections of the same course may not have different grading systems.