

# Articulation 101

## A Brief Overview

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## I. What is articulation?

Articulation refers to the process of developing formal agreements between California Community Colleges (CCC) and UC Santa Cruz (UCSC) departments and/or undergraduate programs. Articulation agreements:

- A) Identify courses offered at CCCs whose learning outcomes are comparable to, or acceptable in lieu of, lower-division courses offered at UCSC.
- B) Outline how courses offered at the CCCs may apply to UCSC major, minor, and/or GE requirements.

Articulation agreements are specific to institutions, departments, and courses. UC Santa Cruz has its own unique articulation agreements with each of the 115 CCCs, which can be the same, similar, or different from agreements made by other UCs. Articulation at UCSC is overseen by the Articulation Officer.

Articulation agreements are recorded and maintained on the **Articulation System Stimulating Interinstitutional Student Transfer** ([ASSIST.org](https://assist.org)) website. ASSIST is the official public database of articulation agreements for California's public colleges and universities, and is funded by the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California.

## II. Why is articulation important?

Many students choose to start their college career at a community college for financial, personal, and family reasons. Keeping articulation agreements up to date is one of the best ways that faculty and departments can support the transfer pathway chosen by many high achieving and responsible students. Articulation is critical to advancing the mission and institutional priorities of UCSC. Informed, intentional, and faculty-engaged articulation supports the educational mission of the university by supporting the following outcomes:

**Transfer student major preparation.** UCSC faculty involvement in the articulation of CCC coursework is essential. Transfer students are better prepared to advance to the next level of instruction when they are able to access courses identified by the UCSC faculty as appropriate and equivalent major preparation. Faculty play an important role in ensuring their future

students receive the foundational education that will prepare them for success after transferring.

**Reduces barriers to transfer.** Articulation agreements provide prospective transfer students with clear guidance on which required and recommended courses they need to complete in order to meet UCSC admissions, major screening, and qualification policies, as well as satisfy course prerequisites and degree requirements. Expanding student access to faculty-approved articulated coursework:

- reduces informational and procedural barriers
- eliminates the duplication of lower-division coursework after transfer
- accelerates access to upper-division courses with high impact learning opportunities
- facilitates timely graduation.

**Increases equitable access to higher education.** More than 70% of students enrolled at the CCCs in 2022 were from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.<sup>1</sup> Despite recent gains made among some underrepresented groups, the students who successfully transfer to the University of California are not reflective of the full diversity of the CCCs.<sup>2</sup> Efficacious articulation agreements and legible transfer pathways to UCSC help to address equity gaps in educational attainment for students who have been historically underrepresented in higher education.

### III. How are courses articulated?

Articulation agreement requests can be initiated by:

- A CCC Articulation Officer
- UCSC faculty or designated department/program staff
- The UCSC Articulation Officer

Regardless of who initiates the request, **all CCC courses considered for articulation are reviewed by UCSC faculty in the appropriate course sponsoring agency** (i.e. department or program). The UCSC Articulation Officer submits the course information and associated materials to the department representative (usually an undergraduate advisor), who then

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<sup>1</sup> Christian, Sonya. 2023. [2022–2023 State of the System Report](#). California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

<sup>2</sup> Cuellar Mejia, M., Johnson, H., Alesi Perez, C., Jackson, J. 2023. [Strengthening California's Transfer Pathway](#). Public Policy Institute of California.

forwards the request to the faculty. Articulation review processes vary by department. Some have faculty who teach the corresponding UCSC course review incoming requests, while others delegate this task to undergraduate program directors or curriculum committees. Once the articulation review is complete, the decision is reported to the UCSC Articulation Officer, who then informs the CCC Articulation Officer of the outcome and records approved agreements in ASSIST.org.

**NOTE:** Only courses that have been vetted and approved for Transfer Course Agreements (TCAs) by the UC Office of the President may be considered for articulation. TCAs are the baseline for establishing transferability of CCC courses to UC. CCC courses that are not approved for TCA are not transferable, do not award unit credit, and may not be considered for articulation. For more information about the TCA process, visit the [University of California Transfer Articulation website](#).

#### **IV. What materials are provided for articulation review?**

When an articulation agreement request is submitted, the UCSC faculty are provided with a [Course Outline of Record \(COR\)](#), an official institutional document with defined legal standing. CORs guide curriculum development and assessment at the CCCs by dictating the content, objectives, requirements, and evaluation methods for **all offerings** of a specific course. Syllabi, by contrast, allow individual CCC instructors the autonomy to include additional course content beyond the minimum COR requirements in their unique teaching of a course. Only an official COR may be used to review and approve articulation agreements with the CCCs, as this ensures students achieve the same learning outcomes and receive the same minimum preparation, regardless of when they take the course or who teaches it. Individual syllabi cannot be used to establish articulation agreements due to potential additions and variations in course content.

#### **V. What should be considered when deciding whether to articulate a course?**

It is a very common misconception that a CCC course must be identical in order to articulate to a UCSC course. In actuality, CCC courses only need to be **comparable** to UCSC courses. Some

variation in content is expected and acceptable. When deciding whether to articulate, faculty should consider the **learning outcomes** of the UCSC course, and reflect on which are essential preparation for the next level of instruction in the major or discipline. If the learning outcomes adequately prepare students to advance in their studies, then articulation to the corresponding UCSC course is likely appropriate. If a comparable course is not articulated, students either need to duplicate significant overlapping coursework or navigate the process of requesting an exception from the relevant department.

By supporting up-to-date articulation agreements that are publicly available in [ASSIST.org](https://assist.org), departments can reduce their overall volume of one-off student petitions. By focusing time and energy on articulation reviews that benefit many students, faculty can reduce the overall time they spend reviewing individual student petitions, which often involve repeat reviews of the same course.

The absence of an articulation agreement in ASSIST does not imply one cannot or should not exist. There are at least 100,000 individual courses offered across the CCC system, and UCSC has only reviewed a small portion of that number. If you are alerted to a CCC course that you believe is appropriate for articulation, please let the UCSC Articulation Officer ([articulation@ucsc.edu](mailto:articulation@ucsc.edu)) know!

## **VI. Are there processes similar or related to articulation?**

An **equivalency** is the identification of comparable courses offered at non-CCC postsecondary educational institutions, such as other UCs, CSUs, and other domestic 4-year universities. The process for establishing an equivalency is similar to but distinct from establishing an articulation agreement. Similar to articulation, all non-CCC courses considered for an equivalency are reviewed by UCSC faculty in the appropriate course sponsoring agency. Approved equivalencies are published in the [UC Santa Cruz Transfer Evaluation System \(TES\) public-facing website](https://ucsc.edu/tes). The TES platform is hosted by College Board.

## **VII. Who do I contact if I want to learn more about articulation?**

If you'd like to learn more about articulation, explore options for expanding your program's articulation agreements, or have any questions, please reach out to Stephanie Sawyer, UCSC's Articulation Officer ([articulation@ucsc.edu](mailto:articulation@ucsc.edu)).