

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 1217 (Fong) – As Introduced February 21, 2025

**[Note: This bill is double referred to the Assembly Committee on Education, where the Committee will hear it as it relates to issues under its jurisdiction.]**

**SUBJECT:** Public postsecondary education: admissions standards and criteria

**SUMMARY:** Establishes the intention of the Legislature for how high school courses will be evaluated by the segments for content in order to determine if the course meets the admission requirements of the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU). Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requests the UC to align all assistance provided to high schools on A-G course approval, with the content standards and frameworks adopted by the California State Board of Education (state board).
- 2) Adds to the procedures the Legislature intends for the UC and CSU to undertake when determining the standards and criteria for undergraduate programs, Declares it is the intent of the Legislature for the UC and CSU to do the following, in addition to existing procedures:
  - a) Develop the standard and criteria based on the content standards and frameworks as adopted by the state board for the subject area;
  - b) Develop processes that strive to be fair and easily understandable; and,
  - c) Consult with the state board before adopting or changing the standards and criteria for admission and broadly consult with California's diverse ethnic and cultural communities.
- 3) Preserves the original language for admissions to graduate programs.
- 4) Requires the CSU and requests the UC to do the following:
  - a) Establish a set of academic standards for high school courses (undergraduate admission standards) for purposes of recognition for admission to the CSU and UC;
  - b) Encourages the development of the undergraduate admission standards to be done in consultation with the state board and the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC); and,
  - c) In creating the set of academic standards for high school courses, the segments are encouraged to strive to align the undergraduate admission standards with the K-12 content standards and frameworks, as defined.
  - d) Develop, by January 1, 2028, a process for high school courses to be approved as meeting the undergraduate admission standards. The process will require the approving entity by February 1, to inform schools whether the courses have been approved as meeting the undergraduate admission standards for the coming academic year. If an application is

denied the approving entity shall provide a reason for the denial and suggest ways the high school can obtain future approval.

- 5) Removes language declaring it is the Legislature's intent for the undergraduate admission standards to be aligned with the academic standards for high school courses, as specified.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the UC as a public trust to be administered by the Regents and grants the Regents full powers of organization and governance subject only to legislative control as necessary to ensure the security of funds, compliance with terms of its endowments, and the statutory requirements around competitive bidding and contracts, sales of property, and the purchase of materials, goods, and services (Article IX, Section (9) (a) of the California Constitution).
- 2) Establishes the CSU system, comprised of 23 campuses, and bestows upon the CSU Trustees, through the BOT, the power, duties, and functions with respect to the management, administration, and control of the CSU system (Education Code (EDC) Sections 66606 and 89000 et. Seq.).
- 3) Stipulates no provision of the Donahue Higher Education Act shall apply to the UC unless the UC Regents adopts the provision (EDC Section 67400).
- 4) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to assist all school districts in offering a core curriculum that meets the admission requirements of the UC and CSU. The SPI will advise districts that include high schools about the importance of having a list of high school courses which are approved by the UC for admission (A-G course lists). States it is the intent of the Legislature for every public high school to have a full program with courses that meet collegiate requirements and for the students to receive counseling on college-admission course offerings. States it is the intent of the Legislature for the primary and secondary education agencies, public higher education institutions, and independent higher education institutions to work together to ensure students have access to course that will enable them to attend college. Prohibits any policy or practice in any public elementary or secondary school from excluding or directing students away from programs that fully prepare a student for college (EDC Section 66204, subdivision (a)).
- 5) Requests the UC to assist each school district with a high school in order to ensure all the following occur:
  - a) School districts understand how to submit courses to the UC to be reviewed and certified as meeting the undergraduate criteria for admissions;
  - b) School districts have an internal process for developing and submitting courses for review and certification by the UC as meeting the undergraduate criteria for admissions; and,
  - c) School districts maintain accurate lists of courses that are currently offered by high school and are certified by the UC as meeting the undergraduate criteria for admissions and ensure those lists are readily available to students, as described (EDC Section 66204 subdivision (b) and (c)).

- 6) States it is the intent of the Legislature for the UC and CSU to enroll a student body that meets high academic standards and reflects the cultural, racial, geographic, economic, and social diversity of California. States the intention of the Legislature for the UC and CSU when determining the undergraduate and graduate admission standards and criteria for the systems to do the following:
  - a) Develop processes which strive to be fair and are easily understandable;
  - b) Consider the use of criteria and procedures that would allow students to enroll and when necessary, make up for course deficiencies beyond their control if the student is otherwise fully eligible and admissible to their chosen program of study;
  - c) Consult broadly with California's diverse ethnic and cultural communities (EDC Section 66205).
- 7) States it is the intention of the Legislature for the academic standards for a high school course to meet the model uniform set of standards for admission to the CSU and UC (A- G course criteria) should align with the standards developed by the Academic Content Standards Commission in 2010 and adopted by the state board. Requires the CSU and requests the UC to do the following:
  - a) Establish a model uniform set of standards for high school courses (A-G course criteria) for the purpose of determining eligibility for admission to undergraduate programs offered by the UC and CSU.
  - b) When developing the A-G course criteria, the faculty of the CSU and UC may work in consultation with administrators and faculty from K-12 schools. Requires K-12 schools who are consulted to establish advisory boards with specified membership, including parents, classroom teachers in career technical education, business and industry representatives, to provide additional input.
  - c) Develop and implement a process for approving high school courses meeting the A-G course criteria by January 1, 2006. The courses will be approved by August 1 of each school year and a notification will be provided to the high school of the approval or denial of the course as meeting the A-G course criteria.
  - d) Develop a procedure to evaluate a high school career education course as meeting the A-G course criteria, as defined.
  - e) Take into consideration any previous work conducted to approve a high school course as meeting the A-G course criteria.
  - f) Develop guidelines for high school computer courses to be approved as meeting the A-G course criteria (EDC Section 60605.8).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:** *Author's intent.* As described by the author, "during a Joint Assembly Education and Higher Education Committees oversight hearing in October 2024, we were surprised to learn that the UC does not base content review of high school courses on the content

standards of K-12, but rather on their own internal metrics of whether a high school course prepares students for the UC quantitative reasoning requirement. This goes beyond simply having the appropriate course on a student's transcript. What occurs when the UC and the K-12 State Board of Education disagree on the content criteria for a course? There already exists a procedure by which the UC collaborates with K-12 and the State Board of Education in the development of K-12 content standards. While the authority over admission criteria for undergraduate admissions lies within the jurisdiction of the UC's authority, the authority to determine the content standards for K-12 courses resides with the State Board of Education. If the UC wishes to continue to review courses for their content then the UC must determine if the courses meet the standards required by the State Board and not by the UC's internal standards. AB 1217 would realign the review of A-G courses with the K-12 content standards."

*K-12 course standards and framework.* Every year thousands of students apply to the CSU and UC with the hope of attending the university campus of their choice. However, the journey to higher education does not begin with the college application, but rather in the courses, a student elects to take in high school.

The Education Code Sections 51225.3 and 51224.5 set the minimum course requirements for a high school diploma:

- 1) Three courses in English (or three years);
- 2) Two courses in Mathematics, including at least one year in Algebra I (as required by EDC Section 51224.5);
- 3) Three courses of Social Science including U.S. history, world history, and at least one semester of economics;
- 4) One course in visual or performing arts, world language, or career technical education;
- 5) Two courses in physical education;
- 6) One semester of ethnic studies, beginning in the 2029-30 school year; and,
- 7) One semester of a stand-alone course in personal finance (beginning in the 2030-31 school year).

In addition to the courses delineated in the Education Code, a school board (comprised of locally elected members who oversee the schools contained within a K-12 district) may adopt additional course requirements for graduation. Regardless of the number of courses a student must take to receive a high school diploma, the California State Board of Education (SBE) and the Instructional Quality Commission determine the content standards for each course. In addition to content standards, the SBE and IQC also provide frameworks and model curriculum for K-12 school districts. Content standards are the "subjects or concepts" a student must understand after completing the course, the framework is the guidance issued to help educators design curriculum, and the curriculum is how the teacher will provide the student the content standard.

According to the California Department of Education (CDE), "curriculum frameworks provide guidance for the implementation of content standards adopted by the State Board of Education. The curriculum frameworks are developed by the Instructional Quality Commission, which also

will review and recommend textbooks and other instructional material to be adopted by the State Board of Education.”<sup>1</sup> The curriculum framework and “approved textbooks are a tool used by K-12 districts to develop curriculum (what is taught in the classroom) in order to meet the required standards.”<sup>1</sup>

The cycle of developing content standards to in-classroom curriculum is a long and arduous process. At various points, content experts, including faculty from all three public higher education institutions, provide input and evaluate the content standards, frameworks, and model curriculum. Every course offered in high school has either course content requirements or a framework; which, provide guidance for the development of curriculum.

A separate set of course requirements exist beyond the high school diploma requirements for admission to the UC and CSU. While some of the courses required for admission are also required for a high school diploma, some courses are supplemental and are required to prepare a student for the academic rigor of college. Colloquially known as the A-G course requirements, the required courses are a bi-segmental agreement between the CSU and UC of the required high school courses for admission to the systems.

*UC and CSU course requirements for admission.* The CSU Board of Trustees oversees the CSU system and the UC Board of Regents (UC Regents) oversees the UC system. Each Board manages the admission process and content requirements for undergraduate admissions. Title 5 Regulations Section 40601 and 40753 lists the course requirements for admission to the CSU and Regent policy 2102 lists course requirements for admission to the UC. The required courses for admission to the two system are similar by design with a few notable exceptions. The following chart provides the A-G requirements or the required admission courses for both systems in accordance with their policy or regulation:

<b>High School Subject Area</b>	<b>UC A-G Requirements</b>	<b>CSU A-G Requirements</b>
<b>Social Studies/Science (Area A)</b>	Two years of history/social science, including one year of world history and either [one year of U.S. history] OR [one-half year of U.S. history and one-half year of civics or American government].	Two years – one year of social science and either [one year of U.S. history] OR [one semester in U.S. history and one semester in civics or American government].
<b>English (Area B)</b>	Four years of English with no more than one year of English as a Second Language English	Four years - English composition and literature
<b>Mathematics (Area C)</b>	Three years, including courses that cover the topics of elementary algebra, geometry, and intermediate algebra. Four years is recommended.	Three years of college preparatory math including algebra, geometry, and intermediate algebra. Four years is recommended.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/>

<b>Science (Area D)</b>	Two years of courses which cover two of the three subject of biology, chemistry, or physics. One year of interdisciplinary or earth and space sciences can met one course. Computer Science, Engineering, Applied Science courses can also qualify.	Two years of college preparatory science required with laboratory – ideally one in biological and one in a physical subject. Integrated science courses are accepted.
<b>Foreign Language (Area E)</b>	Two years in same language required. Three years recommended.	Two years in same language required.
<b>Visual and Performing Arts (Area F)</b>	One year of visual and performing arts chosen from the following: dance, drama/theater, music, or visual art. If the student attends a school with semester – only course, the student must take two semesters worth of the same discipline.	One year or the equivalent of two semesters of visual and performing arts chosen from the following: dance, drama/theater, music, or visual art.
<b>Electives (Area G)</b>	One year or the equivalent of two semester courses in an A-G discipline.	One year in an approved academic course.
<b>Total</b>	15 (11 courses must be completed prior to the student's last year in high school)	15

Source: University of California<sup>2</sup> and California State University<sup>3</sup>

EDC Section 66205 authorizes the CSU and the UC to establish the criteria for undergraduate and graduate admissions and EDC Section 66205.5 authorizes the CSU and the UC to develop a model set of academic standards for high school courses. The Legislature stipulated it was their intent for the required academic standards for admission to the CSU and UC to align with the content standards from the SBE and the IQC for the high school courses. Having above A-G courses on a student's transcript is only one-part of the qualifying process for the CSU and UC. The course listed must be certified as an "A-G" course by the UC..

*The A-G certified course list.* Beginning in 1965, the UC has required high schools to submit high school courses for review and approval as A-G courses for purposes of meeting the admission requirements for the CSU and UC. The UC Enrollment Services Unit reviews and approves high school course as "A-G" and maintains a list of approved A-G courses.<sup>4</sup> In a 2016 audit on how the State could better prepare high school students for college the California State Auditor explained the process for approving high school course as A-G:

- 1) All college preparatory courses must be certified by UC as A-G approved. Courses that are approved by UC meet both UC and CSU admission requirements. UC is the only state entity

<sup>2</sup> <https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/admission-requirements/freshman-requirements/subject-requirement-a-g.html>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.calstate.edu/apply/freshman/getting\\_into\\_the\\_csu/pages/admission-requirements.aspx#hsReqScroll](https://www.calstate.edu/apply/freshman/getting_into_the_csu/pages/admission-requirements.aspx#hsReqScroll)

<sup>4</sup> <https://hs-articulation.ucop.edu/agcourselist>

that certifies if a course is A-G approved. CSU adopted the same basic college preparatory curriculum (A-G course sequence) and relies on UC to approve the courses.

- 2) To certify a course, California high schools submit college preparatory courses in the seven A-G areas to the UC.
- 3) UC evaluates the course submissions based on criteria developed by the UC Board of Admission and School Relations (UC BOARS).
- 4) UC maintains an A-G list for each school and instructs schools to update the lists regularly. The A-G course lists for each school should include all courses available to students for the upcoming academic year that have been approved by the UC.<sup>5</sup>

*UC Board of Admission and School Relations (UC BOARS).* As mentioned above, the UC Enrollment Services Unit assesses high school courses for content that meets the criteria set by UC BOARS.

UC BOARS is a sub-committee of the UC Systemwide Academic Senate. UC BOARS oversees all matters relating to the admission of undergraduate students. UC BOARS regulates the policies used in the admission process and directs efforts to improve the admission process.<sup>6</sup> The membership of UC BOARS includes one faculty representative from each of the 10 UC campuses, two additional faculty acting as Chair and Vice Chair, and two student representatives. In addition to the members of the Committee, staff from the UC Office of the President attend the meetings and provide technical support.<sup>7</sup> The primary objective of UC BOARS is to determine if the undergraduate admission criteria is representative of the academic requirements to succeed at the UC. If a majority of the membership of UC BOARS determines a change is required, UC BOARS will make a recommendation to the full assembly of the Academic Senate. If approved by the Academic Senate, the UC Regents will then approve the change in admission criteria at a public meeting of the board.

Additional authority granted to UC BOARS by the UC Academic Senate bylaws, includes the following:

“Require secondary schools in California whose graduates are to be admitted on a transcript to submit for approval a list of those courses certified by the school as fulfilling the subject requirements for admission. The committee shall review these courses annually.”<sup>8</sup>

*Committee staff note it is unclear when the transition occurred from having UC BOARS review courses annually for approval to the A-G list maintained by the UC Office of the President, but currently the responsibility of reviewing and approving courses lies with the Enrollment Services Unit in the UC Office of the President.*

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<sup>5</sup> <https://information.auditor.ca.gov/reports/2016-114/introduction.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/committees/boars/index.html>

<sup>7</sup>

[https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/rosters/committees.html?admin\\_task=committee\\_details&comm\\_name=boars](https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/rosters/committees.html?admin_task=committee_details&comm_name=boars)

<sup>8</sup> <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/bylaws-regulations/bylaws/blpart2.html#bl145>

*Joint Oversight Legislative Hearing on Area C changes.* On July 07, 2023, UC BOARS unanimously voted to remove data science and statistics as a qualifying course to replace Algebra II on a high school student's transcript. Algebra II is a required A-G course listed in the UC Regent policy. The decision to exclude data science and statistics as replacements for algebra II is directly contrary to the newly adopted Mathematics Framework published by the State Board of Education. The decision to remove data science and statistics as a suitable alternative to algebra II undermined years of work by the State Board of Education and the Instructional Quality Commission to improve data literacy and mathematical attainment in the K-12 system.

On October 10, 2024, the Chairs of the Assembly Committee on Education and the Assembly Committee on Higher Education hosted a joint oversight hearing to determine the scope of the unintended consequences of the UC BOARS decision to change the conditions for undergraduate admission. Dr. Deborah Swenson, the Chair of the UC BOARS, and the Executive Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Dr. Han Mi Yoon-Wu represented the UC during the hearing.

A key component of the hearing was learning the reasoning and justification for the reclassification of data science and statistics as inadequate substitutes for algebra II. Specifically, what criteria was examined by UC BOARS to determine the courses lacked adequate course content to be considered substitutes for algebra II. To provide an answer to the overarching questions, Dr. Deborah Swenson stated, "BOARS primarily consulted disciplinary experts who are data scientists" not K-12 content standards experts.<sup>9</sup> When asked if K-12 experts were consulted, both UC representatives stated "not to their knowledge."<sup>9</sup> The justification for the change according to Dr. Swenson was because data science is an emerging field of study and the state does not have content standards nor a framework by which to justify the content for the curriculum.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it is impossible for the UC to say whether data science and statistics courses are suitable alternative for algebra II because K-12 does not have content standards for data science and the existing K-12 statistics standards do not have algebra II content.

*Committee staff note that calculus is an UC approved alternative to algebra II and that the K-12 calculus standards do not have algebra II content.*

The primary issue is UC BOARS compared high school data science courses to college data science courses and found the high school curriculum was lacking in content because the college-level data science requires a mastery of calculus principals. As stated by Dr. Swenson, "as faculty looked at data science at the high school level, they may have thought data science would look the way it does at the University, it was not the math instruction students need if they want to be a STEM major on campus."<sup>9</sup>

By adopting a narrow version of what qualifies as an algebra II course, UC BOARS is essentially narrowing the field of qualified students for the UC instead of in their own words maintaining, "the goal of inclusivity."<sup>9</sup>

*Arguments in support.* As expressed by the Campaign for College Opportunity, "without a statewide mechanism for coordination on undergraduate admissions among K-12 and higher education leaders, decisions like these risk creating unnecessary barriers for student college access rather than expanding access to higher education. AB 1217 affirms the need for greater coordination between the California State University (CSU), the University of California (UC),

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<sup>9</sup> <https://ahed.assembly.ca.gov/media/3294>



and the State Board of Education to ensure that the admissions process is better aligned with the state's K-12 content standards and frameworks. By encouraging this alignment, the bill will help ensure that college admissions requirements reflect the diverse pathways students take to college and career readiness.”

*Committee comments.* As stated above, UC BOARS felt the need to change UC admission policy because the SBE and IQC have not approved data science content standards. Specifically, Dr. Swenson stated, “you will not see BOARS weigh in on higher standards for English.”<sup>9</sup> The implication being if there is an adopted K-12 standard or framework, UC BOARS will adopt similar criteria. However, UC BOARS has put forth a proposal to adopt new A-G subject matter: Area H – ethnic studies requirement and the proposed admission criteria for the subject matter does not align with the model curriculum adopted by the SBE. Furthermore, the UC’s proposed criteria does not align with the requirements stipulated in the Education Code for the ethnic studies graduation requirement. The UC has deliberated the inclusion of an ethnic studies admission requirement for four years and over those years, it is clear, the intention of the UC faculty is to offer an alternative more expansive ethnic studies course that would make the model curriculum from the SBE obsolete.

In December 2024, the UC Academic Senate was set to vote on the proposal for an Area H – ethnic studies requirement for admission. The background material provided with the action item stated the following: “because the state does not currently have college-prep ethnic studies curriculum standards in place (no such standards exist), UC’s proposed criteria would fill that important gap.” While there is no standards, there is a model curriculum and the requirements for the course listed in the Education Code. If the UC were to adopt additional criteria, it would mean high schools would have to re-adjust their ethnic studies courses to meet the UC admission standards for ethnic studies.

*Committee staff note the UC Academic Senate chose to postpone the vote to the April 2025 meeting. The admission conditions change of adding an Area H does require a vote of the UC Regents and the UC Academic Senate prior to implementation.*

AB 1217 (M. Fong) would codify the desire of the Legislature for the UC to evaluate high school courses for A-G, through the lens of K-12 academic content, framework, and model curriculum. AB 1217 (M. Fong) would request the UC to align their uniform model course requirements for admission with the K-12. AB 1217 (M. Fong) would also align the A-G course approval process to the K-12 academic calendar. By having, the courses submitted sooner in the year, K-12 districts would have time to adjust students’ schedules if a course is not A-G approved.

*To align the measure with the intent of the Author, the Committee has suggested and the author has accepted the following amendments:*

- 1) Amends Section 66204, subdivision (c) to read as follows:

The University of California is requested to align ~~assistance provided pursuant to paragraphs (1) to (3) of subdivision (b) with the content standards and frameworks~~ *the admission requirement criteria used in the review and certification of high school courses pursuant to paragraphs (1) and (2) of subdivision (b) with the content standards, frameworks, and model curriculum* adopted by the state board for the applicable subject area.

- 2) Amends Section 66205, subdivision (a), paragraph (1), subparagraph (A) to read as follows:

(A) Develop the standards and criteria based on the content ~~standards and frameworks~~ *standards, frameworks, and model curriculum* adopted by the state board for the applicable subject area.

- 3) Amends Section 66205.5, subdivision (a), paragraph (1) to read as follows:

Establish a model uniform set of academic standards for high school courses, including career technical *education* courses pursuant to subdivision (i) of Section 51220, for the purposes of recognition for admission to the California State University and to the University of California, respectively. In developing the model academic standards, the faculty of the postsecondary segments are strongly encouraged to work in consultation with the state board and the Instructional Quality Commission and strive to align the model academic standards with the content ~~standards and frameworks established under Article 2 (commencing with Section 60604) of Chapter 5 of Part 33 of Division 4 of Title 2.~~ *standards, frameworks, and model curriculum adopted by the state board for the applicable subject areas.*

- 4) Amends Section 66205.5, subdivision (a), paragraph (2) to read as follows:

*On or before January 1, 2028, develop and implement a speedy process whereby high schools may obtain approval of their courses to satisfy specified admissions requirements of the California State University and the University of California, respectively, on or before January 1, 2028. The approval process local educational agencies may annually submit their courses to the approving entity as satisfying the model academic standards established pursuant to subdivision (a). The approving entity shall, by February 1 of each year for the upcoming school year, notify applying schools local educational agencies whether the application for approval certification for their submitted courses has been approved or denied. If an application certification has been denied, the approving entity shall provide a reason for the denial and suggest ways the high school local educational agency can obtain future approval.*

- 5) Adds subdivision (b) to Section 66205.5 to read as follows:

*For purposes of this section, "local educational agency" means a school district, county office of education, or charter school serving pupils in grades 9 to 12, inclusive*

*Similar legislation.*

AB 684 (Patel) of 2025, is scheduled to be heard in Assembly Higher Education Committee on April 08, 2025. The measure would subject UC BOARS to the Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act.

AB 500 (Quirk - Silva) of 2025, is scheduled to be heard in Assembly Higher Education Committee on April 08, 2025. The measure establishes the procedures the California State Legislature intends for the UC Regents to undertake prior to a vote to determine a change in the undergraduate admissions criteria or standards for admission to the UC.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

Campaign for College Opportunity

**Opposition**

None on file.

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