

**SAN JOSÉ STATE
UNIVERSITY
ONE WASHINGTON SQUARE
SAN JOSÉ, CA 95192**

S26-5, University Policy, Criteria for Upper-Division Courses

Legislative History:

On April 13, 2026, the Academic Senate approved University Policy, Criteria for Upper-Division Courses, presented by Senator Chang for the Curriculum and Research Committee.

Rescinds: S85-4

Action by University President:

Date: April 20, 2026

Signed and approved by: 
Cynthia Teniente-Matson, President,
San José State University

S26-4, University Policy, Criteria for Upper-Division Courses

Rationale. University Policy S85-4 defined the criteria for upper-division courses, which are legally distinct from lower-division courses under the California Code of Regulations Title 5 (Education). Since that time, certain practices have changed, which necessitate a policy review and renewal to meet current standards and practices. The other primary reason for the policy, as explained in S85-4, remains valid: SJSU has an obligation to its colleagues in the community colleges to explain why a given course is placed in the upper division, as community colleges typically offer only lower-division courses.

RESOLVED, That University Policy S85-4 be rescinded; and be it further

RESOLVED, That all upper-division courses (including upper-division GE) shall have clearly defined prerequisites or a justification for upper-division designation, and be it further

RESOLVED, That one or more of the following criteria shall be used, in official descriptions for upper-division courses:

1. Specific course prerequisites in the same or closely related subject matter areas that demonstrate requisite foundational knowledge and skills.
2. Course prerequisites in supportive subject matter areas or interdisciplinary areas that provide essential background or complementary expertise.
3. Demonstrated competency in General Education, such as composition, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, understanding of American Institutions, or equivalent proficiency demonstrated through assessment.
4. Upper division standing (completion of 60 units), equivalent progress within a degree program, or instructor consent, reflecting the students' overall preparedness for advanced coursework; and be it further

RESOLVED, When a course is completed at the lower-division level at other institutions but offered as an upper-division course with similar content at SJSU as determined by the department, students shall be given the opportunity to take a challenge exam for Credit By Examination (CBE) in accordance with [Policy S24-1](#); and be it further

RESOLVED, That these criteria for upper-division courses shall be stated in the university catalog; and be it further

RESOLVED, Departments retain the right to allow "consent of instructor" as an alternative to meeting prerequisites for enrollment in upper-division courses.

Date Approved: 03-02-26

Vote: 13-0-0

Present: Megan Chang (chair), Stefan Frazier, Arvinder Loomba, James Brent, Scott Shaffer, David Yan, Raha Shojaei, Cristina Velarde, Marc d'Alarcao, Melinda Jackson, Jessica Trask, Ellen Middaugh, Vishnu Pendyala

Absent: Emily Paredes

Financial impact: none

Workload impact: Additional workload to create and administer challenge exam if needed.