

## Course Designator/Subject Code Request Review Checklist

DRAFT  
01-27-2015

**Materials linked from the January 29, 2015 Curriculum Council agenda.**

The request is coming from

College:

School/Department:

Degree Program:

What is the requested course designator/subject code?

Criteria for Consideration
1. Has the course designator been used in 6 years? (Registrar's office check. If yes, then ineligible)
2. A. Does the content represented by this course designator significantly overlap with the content represented by other existing course designators? (Consider cross listing overlap too.) B. Can sub specifications possibly be achieved through course title rather than the course designator (e.g. WGSS: Course Title; QS: Course Title)
<p>NOTE: Course designators have been suggested as a way to enhance interdisciplinary instruction. Please note the current policy on crosslisting.</p> <p>Crosslisting a course is a mechanism to facilitate multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary instruction. Crosslisted courses are offered by more than one department and a) contain the same title, credits, description, and prerequisites; b) have designators that reflect the departments offering the courses; and c) include a distinctive statement at the end of the description to indicate that the course is crosslisted.</p> <p>Each participating unit must share in the development and teaching of the course. The Schedule Desk will not schedule different courses at the same time and place unless they are crosslisted. Proposing or changing a crosslisted course requires a <a href="#">Category II proposal</a> and can be accomplished with a single proposal, but must include liaison with each participating unit's department heads/chairs and colleges, and with other affected units (i.e. units that may use this course as a prerequisite).</p>
3. Is the course designator affiliated with a formal academic program (major, minor, certificate?) List program type:
4. Does the course designator align with other similar course designators at other higher education institutions.
5. Is the course designator easily identifiable and associated with academic subjects/topics/recognizable by field? [ You may refer to the CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code to this as well.]
6. Is the course designator easily identifiable by students?
7. Changes to this course designator has a minimal risk of a large number of students unintentionally retaking the same course (from a large number of courses being changed and/or large enrollment courses or large enrollment programs.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How many courses will use this course designator?</li><li>• How many students are enrolled in the degree program?</li><li>• How many courses have more than 50 students enrolled?</li></ul>
8. Is the management/oversight of the course designator is clearly defined?
9. Are there other considerations?

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### BACKGROUND:

Oregon State University has had the following definition for a course designator:

*An abbreviation representing the department, college, or program offering the course. Example: MB indicates that the course is offered through the Department of Microbiology.*

However, over time the term “course designator” is used synonymously with “subject code,” both of which refer to the abbreviated letters preceding a course number (e.g. MTH to represent a “math class” such as MTH 111. College Algebra). The Course Designator definition implies an association of a course with department, college, or program (i.e. the originating unit or program; the program in which the course is designated). This association, when linked with degree program or unit titles, can be problematic for several reasons. These problems are explained in next section below.

A “subject code” is part of a code to efficiently categorize course-related information to (a) reduce the need for lengthy descriptions, (b) efficiently track and manage courses in a database, catalogs, and student advising systems within the institution, and (c) to create an efficient tracking mechanism for transferring courses from one institution to another.

### b. Problems With Directly Associating Subject Codes/Course Designators with Titles of Departments, Schools, Colleges, or Specific Degrees

Departments, schools, colleges, and degree programs frequently change names because of reorganization, creating a unique identity, or to represent changes and trends in their field. Having the flexibility to change unit and program names is important and necessary. However, by directly associating course designators/subject codes with units and degree titles, programs feel compelled to change the associated course designators with each unit or program name change.

Frequent changes to these codes cause very real negative consequences for students, workloads within and outside the institution, and long-term tracking of the curriculum.

#### **Impacts On Students**

- When a course designator changes, hundreds of OSU students per year unknowingly register for *and take* courses they have already completed, thinking it was a different course. Once the error is discovered, for many of these students it is too late to drop the “repeated” course and register for another course. This can set students back a term or more. In some cases students do not realize the course was a repeat until they notice on their transcript or degree audit that they did not receive credit. In both circumstances students often do not get a refund for the money they spent for the “repeat” course, and they have to spend more money to make up for the credit loss.

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- Changing course designators can also negatively impact transfer students. For example, if curriculum guides or articulation agreements are not updated, or if a person making transfer decisions is not aware of changes to course designators, students may be given credit for a course that no longer exist, which may later be taken away from them, or they may not receive credit or a transfer when they should have.
- Although there are “equivalent course” lists, students do not know to look for such a list and advisors are not consistent in their advising. Although these prevention mechanisms are in place, they are error prone, with high negative impacts. In addition, the system cannot be set up to “prevent registration” for a repeat course. This is because students have the choice to repeat a course to improve a grade, there are many topics courses that allow repeats as the topics change, and there are thesis and dissertation credits that need to be repeated.

### **Workload Impacts**

- When a course designator changes there are many places that the change needs to be reflected, including in Banner, the catalog, program websites, course equivalency lists within and outside OSU, curriculum guides, articulation agreements with other institutions, and accreditation tracking. Making these changes is very time consuming, for multiple people across multiple departments within and outside of OSU. This is particularly true for changes to a large numbers of courses when a program changes its name and then wants all of its courses changed.
- Making a large number of changes in multiple places is also prone to error.

### **Long-term Curriculum Tracking**

- Changing course designators can make long term- curriculum tracking difficult.