

Common Course Numbering Program Administrative Guidelines

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I. PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- a. The Common Course Numbering (CCN) system was established in 2007 under a legislatively-funded request to provide MUS students with a reasonable level of transparency and predictability for the transfer of courses and credits.
- b. CCN Program Manager. The CCN Program Manager position is overseen by the Deputy Commissioner of Academic, Research, and Student Affairs.

II. PROGRAM MAINTENANCE

- a. The Common Course Number system shall be maintained by the CCN Program Manager located in the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education.
- b. Each campus shall select one individual to act as its primary CCN Liaison. The CCN Liaison will facilitate internal and external conversations and reports his or her findings to the CCN Program Manager.
- c. Any determinations or provisions made concerning the CCN System and its associated guidelines and processes shall be given final approval at the discretion of the Commissioner and/or Deputy Commissioners in the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education.
- d. Guidelines for the processes associated with the Common Course Numbering system shall be committed to writing, and the CCN Program Manager will rely on the CCN Liaisons to communicate new guidelines to the appropriate individuals on their campuses. In turn, the CCN Program Manager will maintain a current copy of this information at <http://www.mus.edu/Qtools/CCN/ccn.asp>.

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III. DATA MAINTENANCE AND INTEGRITY—CAMPUS

- a. In order to disrupt campus curriculum and registration processes as briefly as possible, it is critical that all finalized prefix data are recorded in the campus information systems across the university system within one year of the effective date.
- b. Once registration has begun, changes to CCN course data are only allowed in extreme situations. If non-critical changes are made, they will not be applied until the next semester.
- c. For any course that is deemed unique to one campus, that campus may change the title or credit amount per their internal processes without CCN review. The campus shall inform the CCN Program Manager in a timely manner of the change so the change can be recorded in the CCN database.

IV. DATA MAINTENANCE AND INTEGRITY—SYSTEM

- a. In order to maintain transparency and predictability, all undergraduate courses except where explicitly noted in these guidelines must be common course numbered.
- b. In order to maintain the integrity of the MUS course data, all undergraduate courses except where explicitly noted in these guidelines must be reviewed for equivalency.
- c. Activities or recreation related courses (i.e. team sports; personal health and wellness classes; outdoor activities) that are not a specific requirement of an academic degree program are exempt from common course numbering requirements. Such courses should carry either the ACT “Activities: General” or ACTV “Activities: Varsity” rubric. ACT and ACTV courses will not be listed in the CCN course guide.
- d. Activities or recreation related courses that are a specific requirement in an academic degree program are not exempt from common course numbering requirements and should be listed under the REC “Recreation” rubric.
- e. It is not the concern of the CCN Program Manager to determine the uniqueness of academic *programs*, only to assess the content of the individual courses.
- f. All courses deemed to be equivalent must possess the same prefix, course number, and course title; such courses will directly transfer on a one-to-one basis across the Montana University System.

Important note on credit transfer: Common course numbering does not determine *how* credit for any course will be applied at the programmatic level. It only determines, for example, that M 121 will transfer as M 121 across the university system. Whether M 121 counts towards any specific program requirement is entirely at the discretion of the receiving institution/department. If the receiving institution deems the course does not meet its program requirements, the course will be counted as elective credit.

- g. To prevent duplication of course content under different course numbers, all course reviews shall be conducted by faculty peers at the institutions offering similar content. If proposed course content/outcomes are deemed 80-100% similar to an existing course, the proposed course will be aligned with the existing course.

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- h. Appropriate campus-level review faculty will be selected by each campus's CCN Liaison.
- i. For any course deemed equivalent to another course in the CCN system, if the content and outcomes of the course changes substantially, the course shall be resubmitted for review. If the change alters the outcomes by 20%, the course shall be given a new, unique course number and title. It is possible that the change could alter an equivalent course to a degree that it now aligns with a *different* existing course. If that is the case, the course will be realigned with such an existing course.
- j. Course level compliance reports will be run by OCHE at the end of every semester. Campuses will be notified of all courses that are out of compliance with CCN (e.g. have not be common numbered or lack posted learning outcomes).

V. COURSE ALIGNMENT

- a. Courses with common numbers indicate that the courses are deemed to be 80-100% similar in the outcomes they expect students to be able to demonstrate by the end of the class. Because equivalency is determined based on projected learning outcomes (not grading rubrics, course structure, catalog descriptions, textbooks, individual instructors, or facilities), how the course is taught or where the course is taught is not included as a basis of comparison.

VI. COURSE PREFIXES

- a. In order to ensure that the new system-wide numbering method is not confused (especially electronically) with previous campus course numbers, the new system prefix will not duplicate any campus prefix used in the last 10 years.
- b. Prefixes will be comprised of no more than four characters.
- c. Prefixes are limited to alpha characters only.
- d. All prefixes are discipline-neutral. The prefix refers only to a field of study, not to a department, division, program, school, or degree.

VII. COURSE TITLES

- a. Equivalent courses shall have the same officially authorized title, as well as a Banner-abbreviated title limited to 30 characters, to facilitate electronic processes.
- b. Individual campuses may, at their discretion, employ a colon after the official CCN title and add a campus-unique subtitle for cataloging purposes so long as the transcribed course title is listed only by the official CCN title.

VIII. COURSE NUMBERS

- a. All course numbers must contain three numeric characters. Campus specific alpha characters may follow the numeric designators; however, they have no connection to equivalency and must not be used to qualify, modify or otherwise affect established equivalency in any way.
- b. Course numbers for deleted courses shall not be reused for a minimum period of ten years.

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- c. Bag-numbered courses (190s/290s/390s/490s course numbers) are not deemed equivalent in either content or credits. These variable content courses may transfer at the discretion of the receiving programs as either course substitutions or electives.
- d. Learning Outcomes need not be listed for 90 courses on the CCN Course Guide due to the fact that each course is subject to change without notice.

For clarity in communicating the role of 90s courses, the following numbering conventions will be used:

- x90 Undergraduate Research
- x91 Special Topics
- x92 Independent Study
- x93 Study Abroad
- x94 Seminar/Workshop
- x95 Field Work/Clinical/Practicum
- x96 Service Learning
- x97 Education Methods
- x98 Coop Education/Internship
- x99 Senior Thesis/Capstone

IX. COURSE CREDITS

- a. The credit range among courses deemed to be equivalent may not deviate by more than one credit. For example, a course can be offered for 3 credits on one campus and 4 credits on two other campuses, but it cannot be offered for 3 credits on one campus, 4 credits on the second campus, and 2 credits on the third campus.

X. CROSS LISTING

- a. Only one instance of any given course shall exist in the CCN database. Campuses may not cross list courses.

XI. INTEGRATED LECTURE/LAB COURSES

- a. No campus will be asked to change its approach to linking lecture and lab courses. If the courses are separate, the lecture courses will be listed on the CCN web display as the parent course. The satellite lab courses will be listed with a subsequent course number as the child course (e.g. BIOB 101/BIOB 102). If the lab course is integrated with the lecture course, the course will be listed on the CCN web display as the parent course followed by the designation (IL) for integrated lab.
- b. If a lecture course has neither a satellite lab nor an integrated lab course, it will be deemed non-equivalent and given a separate number.

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XII. MISSION

- a. In order to maintain the respective four-year and two-year institutional missions pursuant to BOR Policy 219 and academic integrity, two-year institutions shall not offer courses above the 200 level.
- b. In rare cases, when unanimously agreed to by a faculty disciplinary committee with representation from all institutions offering courses within the discipline, a course may be offered at both the 200- and 300- level. A request for a 200- level course to be listed as equivalent with a 300- level course will be denied unless all the following criteria are met:
 - A 200- level offering is necessary for two-year institutions to offer a disciplinary pathway allowing A.A. or A.S. graduates to complete a bachelor's degree at their transfer institution after two further years of full-time study.
 - Shifting the course wholly to the 200- level would cause hardship for existing 4-year bachelor's degree programs
- c. If such an equivalency is approved, both listings must bear the same title and indicate they are equivalent (ex. CHMY 221 Organic Chemistry (=321)).
- d. Campuses may still utilize local articulation agreements as transfer solutions when direct alignment will not work.

XIII. EXEMPTIONS

- a. Extended and experiential learning courses, such as non-credit professional development courses, life studies courses, community workshops, and other non-transferable courses, are exempt from common course numbering.
- b. It is at the discretion of individual institutions to determine if they want to change the prefixes for graduate-level courses. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education will not maintain any graduate-level course data in the CCN system.

XV. DUAL ENROLLMENT AND COMMON COURSE NUMBERING

- a. Since all courses offered in the MUS must be common course numbered, any course developed by an MUS campus for dual enrollment or dual credit purposes, including online Digital Academy delivery, will be in the CCN system and, thus, will directly transfer on a one-to-one basis across the Montana University System.

XVI. PROCEDURES FOR PROPOSING NEW PREFIXES OR MOVING COURSES WITHIN PREFIXES

- a. The creation of a new prefix or the movement of courses shall cause the least amount of disruption to the system as possible.
- b. In the event that a faculty member believes the creation of a new prefix is warranted, that individual shall present written facts to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education clearly, objectively, and succinctly explaining his or her position as to why a new prefix should be created.

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- c. The creation of a new prefix will be denied if any of the following criteria are met:
 - The placement of courses in the new prefix would break existing course alignments;
 - the placement of newly proposed courses in the new prefix would duplicate courses (80% equivalency rule) that already exist in the CCN system;
 - the area of study for the proposed prefix overlaps an area of study for an existing prefix by 50% or more, or
 - the creation of the prefix is qualified solely by a specific department or program area.
- d. Further consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis if the following criteria are met:
 - The request for a new prefix has system-wide faculty consensus in that area of study and any other affected areas of study;
 - the requested prefix would hold courses that lead to a specific degree not already existing in the MUS;
 - the faculty provides objective metrics indicating the current placement of the course or courses is having negative effects (e.g. decreased enrollment).
- e. The Commissioner will make the final decision for any request for a new prefix. There will be no further appeal.

XVII. EXTERNAL INSTITUTION PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMON COURSE NUMBERING SYSTEM

- a. The MUS has developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will be used as the contract for non-MUS entities that wish to participate in the CCN system in order to facilitate student transfer between its institution and the units of the MUS.
- b. The MUS affirms that courses from a non-MUS entity that have been identified, via the standard CCN course evaluation process set forth in the MOU, as equivalent to those at the campuses of the MUS will directly transfer on a one-to-one basis across the Montana University System.