



MUS No-Cost/Low-Cost Course Catalog Designators

The Montana University System (MUS) will encourage its institutions to prominently designate sections of courses whose course materials exclusively consist of no-cost (open or free textbooks) or low-cost course materials at the point of registration. In Banner, MUS institutions will be able to utilize a new designation for course sections with:

- **NOLO:** \$40 or under required costs

This includes all required instructional materials such as textbooks, websites, software programs, apps, courseware packages, access codes to homework websites, etc.

This does not include:

- **Tools and supplies**, such as a lab coat, lab manual, goggles, notebook paper, art materials, thumb drives, or calculators.
- **Course fees**, such as a lab fee, testing fee, or eLearning fee, except when course fees include instructional materials such as those listed above.
- **Common authoring software**, such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, or Outlook.
- **Small copying/printing costs**. For example, if instructors expect students to have minor printing/copying expenses (for printing out worksheet drafts, assignments, etc.), this expense shouldn't be factored into the consideration.

These designations will use the following code in Banner:

- **NOLO:** \$40 or under required costs

Definition: NoLo Designator

The NoLo designation is for use with course sections that require instructional materials which cost students a total of \$40 or less. These materials may include open educational resources (OER), institutionally licensed campus library materials that all students enrolled in the course have access to use, and other materials that collectively don't exceed \$40 in costs.

Important Note: NoLo is not synonymous with OER. OER have an open license that permits revision and redistribution. NoLo also includes copyright-protected commercial/publisher materials that may have restrictive permissions on re-use and revision.

Guidelines



Calculating your costs

To calculate your text-related costs for this designation, use the pre-tax retail cost of new materials in your campus bookstore. While materials may be less expensive elsewhere, such as on Amazon, students using financial aid often must purchase materials from the bookstore, and while used prices might be lower, used purchasing can be complicated by limited supplies and edition changes. Contact your local bookstore for help with bookstore pricing.

Do rentals count as NoLo?

Rentals, even ones that are \$40 or under, do not qualify as low-cost option for required materials, as they may not be equally accessible to all students. Rentals generally require a student to present a valid personal credit card to be stored on file for any non-return, penalty and/or processing fees, presenting a barrier for some students, and potentially raising the cost of the course materials through late fees or other unexpected credit card charges. In addition, rentals of physical textbooks may have limits on highlighting and writing notes within the textbook.

What if my class has a fee that results in students receiving the required course materials?

Course fees for course materials should be included in the cost calculations. Examples of such fees include Barnes & Noble College Booksellers' First Day fee, or Follett's ACCESS fee. A course with this type of fee will qualify as a NoLo course if it meets the requirements upon including the fee in the total cost calculation.

Other types of course fees are excluded from the calculation, including lab fees, technology fees, or testing fees.

What if my text is available as an e-book through the library?

If your required text is available as a free-to-students e-book through the library, as long as you do not require students to purchase the printed text in your class, your course can qualify for the NoLo designation. Students may assume they must purchase the printed text if you mark a library-provided textbook as required. Consider listing the text as "optional" on the campus bookstore's site and messaging students about their choices before the term begins.

Optional costs should not be included in your calculation.

For example: you provide students with a link to a free, online version of your materials but give them the option to purchase materials in print or point them to an optional homework help platform. The cost of the optional materials should not be included in your calculation.



However, if the print version or homework platform is required in your class, you should include that cost in your calculation.

Only identify courses that meet these cost-cap requirements (\$40 or under).

By default, classes that do not meet the cost cap will not be designated. Students will have the ability to search for courses that meet the material cost cap in the schedule. If a course section has not identified all required materials, it should not be listed as NOLO until all required materials have been selected and calculated.

If a resource is used across multiple courses in a sequence, *do not* base your calculation on the cost divided by those courses.

For example, a text that costs \$120 that is required for three sequenced courses *does not* meet the \$40 or under label requirement. Not all students take all courses in a series, students may take courses over time and may have to pay for edition changes, and students would have to pay the full cost up-front and could not budget for three even payments.

If a course is more than/less than 3 credit hours, can the cost of the text or course materials be prorated across credit hours?

No. When determining the designation, the total costs should be considered regardless of the number of credit hours.

If a course section has an associated lab section, they must be calculated together.

A combined cost for the required instructional materials from lecture and lab should be \$40 or less in order to be labeled as NOLO. This excludes the lab fee and the cost for any supplies or equipment needed for the lab section.

A lecture with lab may be coded separately only if they require separate registration with independent section numbers.

Note that lab manuals are currently excluded from the cost cap.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the cost cap for low-cost materials \$40?

MUS set the \$40 cost cap by looking at peer institutions implementing course designations. Factors such as wages and inflation will be taken into account when looking at future



adjustments.

Does the NoLo designation infringe on the academic freedom that faculty instructors have in order to choose what materials they use in the classroom?

No. No-cost/low-cost designations are a method of providing awareness and transparency to students when a course is using no-cost or low-cost materials. MUS hopes that this increased visibility will lead some faculty to become more aware of no-cost and low-cost options, such as OER. However, faculty should continue to select the materials that best work for them and their students, in coordination with their department.

What if the library has a print copy of the text?

Err on the side of caution when designating a course with only physical copies of a text at the library. Will all students need to check out the material at the same time? If so, the library would need to have enough copies on hand to meet that need in order for the book to be considered no-cost to students. If the book will simply be referred to occasionally, or if only a small portion is required (and could therefore reasonably be photocopied), then perhaps one or two copies on reserve at the library will suffice. Please contact your local librarian to determine whether access to materials through the library – whether print or electronic – will work for your class.

What if I do not require any purchased texts or materials for my class?

Your course *can* qualify for the NoLo designation if no purchased materials or texts are required. For the purposes of this cost designation, it only matters if the collective costs of required course materials is \$40 or under.

What if I am unsure about the cost of my materials?

Consult your bookstore for guidance. If you are still unsure about whether your course meets the NoLo designation, *do not* ask your schedule-builder to designate your course as NoLo.

What if someone designated their course as having no-cost materials, but then the instructor for this section changed?

Please verify the use of no-cost materials with the new instructor and change the designation as soon as possible if needed. If the designation changes, please contact the students who have



already registered for this course about the change, preferably with information about the new required materials.

Examples of qualified cases for NoLo designation:

- Use of open textbooks or other openly-licensed materials that are free to students
- Use of library-licensed resources that are free to students
- Use of an inexpensive commercial textbook costing \$40 or less
- Use of a course material bundle (e.g., textbook and homework website) costing \$40 or less
- Use of faculty-developed course packages costing \$40 or less