

Defining and Renumbering Research and Experiential Courses
Senate Scholastic Standards Committee
University Senate Meeting – October 7, 2019

Motion

The Senate Scholastic Standards Committee moves that the University Senate endorse the proposal on Defining and Renumbering Research and Experiential Courses and forward it to the Office of the Registrar for implementation.

Background

A variety of course titles and numbers are used for experiential learning experiences of various types. However, these courses are not approved for all departments, they are not used consistently across campus, and there are no shared definitions across disciplines.

The rationale for creating common definitions for these types of courses across all schools and colleges is threefold:

1. To provide clear information to students about the type of learning and skills that will be developed in these courses,
2. To ensure that faculty teaching these courses or supervising these experiences are receiving credit for participating in these forms of engaged learning, and
3. To facilitate the university's ability to more accurately report on and assess the number of students and faculty engaging in these high-impact practices.

Proposal

An initial draft proposal, developed by the Senate Scholastic Standards Committee, was circulated among the C&Cs of each undergraduate school and college. This proposal *narrows* the scope of that original draft to include only experiential learning courses. The course types removed (International Study xx93, Seminar xx94, Special Topics xx95, and Variable Topics xx98) seem distinct in scope and nature from the experiential learning courses; therefore, these courses may be reviewed separately at a later date. The revised proposal follows below, along with responses to questions raised by the C&Cs.

Course type	Number	Definition
Field study/Field experience	xx90	Credit awarded for applied academic work done in the field and supervised by a faculty member as a component of a student's academic program.
Internship	xx91	Credit awarded for professional work done in the field, supervised by an external expert and coordinated by a faculty member, which may or may not be part of a student's academic program.
Practicum	xx92	Credit awarded for work done where the primary purpose is to apply information from coursework in a practical setting and aid a student's professional development (may be used for licensure programs).
Undergraduate Research	1x96	Introduction to Research Introduction to the practice of research for beginning students, which may be individualized or taught to a group.
Undergraduate Research	2x96	Directed Research 1 Introductory research conducted under the supervision of the instructor, which may be individualized or conducted by a group.
Undergraduate Research	3x96	Directed Research 2 Individualized research conducted under the supervision of the instructor.
Undergraduate Research	4x96	Independent Research Student-initiated research activities supervised by the instructor.
Thesis	xx97	Credits earned by students for engaging in the process and production of a thesis.
Independent Study	xx99	Credits earned by pursuing individual academic interests under the supervision of a faculty instructor.

Note: S/U versions of these courses may be offered by substituting an 8 for a 9 in the third digit (e.g., Independent Study xx89 [S/U] instead of xx99 [graded]).

Frequently Asked Questions

Must my department establish all of these courses?

No. Each department can select which of the experiential learning courses (and levels) they wish to offer. Any existing courses of these types should be renumbered in order to achieve campus-wide consistency and facilitate reporting.

Won't this create an excessive amount of work and paperwork for departments and/or C&Cs?

SSSC will work with the Office of the Registrar to establish a streamlined template by which departments can create new courses of these types and/or update existing courses and course numbers. Individual CARs will not need to be filed for these course actions. The anticipated work for departments is to discuss and determine which of the experiential learning course offerings are relevant to their disciplines, current modes of instruction,

and learning objectives for their students. The template can then be completed by the C&C in accordance with departmental decisions.

What do we do when a learning experience could fit into two or more course types (e.g., Field Study Internship)?
SSSC suggests that the department choose the course type with the definition that most accurately captures the majority of the course's pedagogical framework. The department can then name the course as they wish, including with a combination of the course type names listed in the chart above. This might be particularly relevant for accreditation or purposes of consistency with terminology most frequently used in the field or discipline.

Can Catalog copy be different across departments even if numbers are consistent?

Yes. Consistency in the numbering of courses will allow for accurate reporting, and differences in Catalog copy will help students understand differences in these courses across fields and disciplines.

Is this just for undergraduates?

The current proposal only applies to undergraduate courses (course numbers 1000-4999).

What is the difference between a research course (xx96) and an independent study (xx99)?

The focus of an individualized research course is engaging in the practice of research or scholarship in a discipline. Outcomes may include asking appropriate research/scholarly questions or identifying appropriate creative objectives, selecting and implementing appropriate methods, analyzing and interpreting results, and producing a product appropriate to the discipline. The focus of an independent study course is the investigation of a specific topic of interest under the guidance of an instructor. The primary modality of such a course is teaching, through directed reading, completion of assignments, discussion, etc. An independent study is a mechanism for a student to complete an academic experience when a course of another type is not available. The main goal of an independent study is learning about a topic via instruction, whereas the main goal of an undergraduate research course is learning about a topic via engagement in the process of research, scholarship, or creative practice.

Couldn't you just put an R designation or attribute on research courses rather than creating distinct courses?

Many institutions are developing or have developed research designations for courses. However, this approach would not address the indistinct definitions of experiential learning, nor the inconsistent use of terminology across the university. The SSSC believes that the present proposal is an appropriate first step toward capturing the full breadth of undergraduate research instruction and activity, as it designates a standard set of course numbers for *individualized* undergraduate research experiences. Note that the present proposal is **not** intended to be applied to *all* courses that involve research skills, methods, or projects across departmental curricula.

A separate proposal related to research designations is under development by the Senate Scholastic Standards Committee. The intention is for these designations to be available for departments to apply to *any* course they offer that takes research as an object or method of study; should this additional proposal be adopted in addition to the present proposal, the university will be able to capture student participation in research instruction across the curriculum.

How does Honors fit into these course types?

Departments have three options for Honors designations at the course level:

1. Honors version of the course and non-Honors version of the course (distinct course numbers)
2. Honors version of the course only
3. No Honors designation at the Catalog level; distinct Honors and non-Honors sections offered

Departments have discretion to create Honors versions of any or all of these courses at the Catalog level, should they wish to do so. A department might want to do this to ensure that the Honors grading basis is affixed to the course every time the course is offered. A department might also want to do this if they have a significant number of non-Honors students participating in these courses, to ensure ease of enrollment for both Honors students and non-Honors students. One factor for consideration is whether the department has different levels of expectation for the course itself, such that distinct Honors and non-Honors versions are offered. For example, a non-Honors internship course might require reflective papers on the experience, whereas an Honors internship course might require a literature review and research article analysis alongside the reflective papers.

A department has the discretion to decide that certain courses should always and only be Honors, because the rigor of the course is always at an Honors level. This would not preclude non-Honors students from enrolling; in fact, the Honors credit designation on their transcripts would be appropriate recognition of the rigor and level of their work in that course. At the course level, the Honors designation should reflect the fact that an Honors-level educational experience is occurring, not the fact that Honors students are enrolled in the course.

Departments could also leave Honors out of the Catalog description of the course and create sections that are either Honors or non-Honors. This would require collaboration with Registrar to ensure that appropriate sections with the appropriate grading basis are created each semester.

Within the list of experiential learning courses, departments can make different decisions related to Honors designations for different courses (e.g., no Honors designation for their internship course, but their thesis course is always an Honors course).

How do thesis courses fit into all of this?

Departments handle theses, senior projects, and capstones in a variety of ways. The xx97 number gives departments the flexibility to offer one or more courses related to the process and/or production of a culminating thesis project. As above, an Honors designation may be applied at the Catalog level or the course section level. Departments could decide that all theses in their department are always Honors-level work, and allow enrollment for any student who is completing this level of work. Departments can decide whether a W designation is appropriate for a course of this type – always, sometimes, or never – by referencing the university's criteria for W courses. Departments still have the discretion to title the course(s) in whichever way is most appropriate to their discipline. Departments may require any prerequisite courses (e.g., undergraduate research or other xx97 courses for a 2-semester thesis experience) they wish. The main difference between a research course and a thesis course is the outcome: while a research course will produce results and products, a thesis course is aimed specifically at the production of results and products that satisfy a departmental definition of a thesis (or capstone, or senior project, etc.).