

FCAA's Revolving Topics Course Series Clarification

The procedural changes outlined in the title varies memo from FCAA last year were designed to address the alarming number of regularly offered courses that had only passed through 10-day challenge period, never receiving review via full governance.

FCAA's intent was also to distinguish between a department's series of courses grouped by a common theme (often called "revolving topics courses"), and a department's shell series of courses that were established via the 10-day challenge process but were never fully vetted (often called title- or topics- varies courses). Both groups tend to use a 4th character letter in the course numbers (e.g., "350g"). Past use of these phrases is confusing and inconsistent, and it is also clear that the phrases are not mutually exclusive.

Two Important Points to Remember:

1) It continues to be OK for a department to group similarly themed courses under the same course number, using a 4th character letter to distinguish the specific courses.

2) Unless a group of courses share a common theme or there is some other compelling internal department reason for grouping courses under a single number, there is no need or benefit to continue to use a series that was established for the sole reason of getting a course on the books quickly. These often called 'title or topic varies' series are no longer necessary given the new temporary course procedure.

These points are more fully discussed below.

Point #1

It continues to be OK for a department to group similarly themed courses under the same course number, using a 4th character letter to distinguish the specific courses.

Example:

ZOOL 310: Birds of the World (shell)

ZOOL 310a: Birds of the World: Penguins

ZOOL 310f: Birds of the World: Golden Eagles

ZOOL 310r: Birds of the World: Ostrich

The shell appears in the Academic Catalog with a description of the theme. Specific course titles may or may not be listed underneath the shell, depending on whether they have gone through full governance or not, and depending on the catalog copy submitted by the department. If they are listed, they do not have a separate course description – the shell course description covers all the courses.

FAQ: What Changed? The shell NO LONGER represents the primary piece to be considered by full governance. The shell is now considered a means by which a department internally organizes its courses. Each of the courses in the shell series now must pass through full governance within a two-year period of being proposed or they are inactivated.

FAQ: What do we do with courses in a previously established revolving topics series that have never gone through full governance?

You have until 15 October 2009 to submit these courses through the streamlined full governance process outlined in the previous FCAA memo. After this date, the courses must go through the non-streamlined process for full governance. The streamlining process disappears after 15 October.

FAQ: What is the process for proposing a new course on hummingbirds into our already established revolving topics series ZOOLOGY 310: *Birds of the World*?

Choose a letter that has not been used previously (eg. ZOOLOGY 310m: *Birds of the World: Hummingbirds*) and submit paperwork (syllabus, etc.) via either of the 2 methods: temporary course method (quicker; course is posted for 10-day challenge period; course has 2 year lifespan) or full governance method (takes longer; course is fully vetted in governance, and has an unlimited lifespan).

- **NOTE:** Choose your course number/letter wisely; if ZOOLOGY 310m: *Birds of the World: Hummingbirds* is established as a temporary course and is allowed to lapse after 2 years, the “310m” number will be retired and rendered unusable for 10 years. Alternately, if it successfully goes through full governance within the 2 year window, it will retain its “310m” designation.

FAQ: What is the process for proposing a new revolving topics course series, such as North American Rivers?

- Provide a shell name and number (*GEOG 380: North American Rivers*), and catalog description for the shell. It is recommended that you include “Consult the Schedule of Classes for specific topics” in the catalog description.
- For each course in the series, assign a letter (a-z) as the 4th character of the course number (eg., *GEOG 380a: North American Rivers: Colorado River*) and submit paperwork as normal (syllabus, rationale, etc.);
- Submit for consideration as either a temporary course (10 day challenge; course is active for 2 years) or for full governance (active indefinitely).
- **NOTE:** If you establish the shell via the temporary course method, the shell only has a lifespan of 2 years and is not listed in the Academic Catalog. It is highly recommended that the department establish the shell and at least the first course in the series through the full governance method so the shell description can appear in the Catalog as other courses are developed.

Point #2

There is no need or benefit to continue to use the often called ‘title or topic varies’ series that was historically used for the sole reason of getting a course on the books quickly. The new temporary course method provides a much more efficient alternative.

If you want to get course established in a short time period, or want to teach it a couple of times to see if it serves your department, simply propose the course via the temporary course method. It will be considered in the 10-day challenge process and may be taught for up to 2 years. During that time it can be proposed through full governance and (once approved) taught indefinitely, or the department can let the course lapse into inactivation.

When proposing a course via the temporary course method, you may assign any course number you wish - with or without a letter designation - that has not been used by your department within the past 10 years. Just remember that the number becomes permanent if the course is approved via full governance or becomes unusable if the course lapses after its temporary 2-year life span.