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**History of Revisions**

**S16-273:** Original

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## 1. INTRODUCTION and RATIONALE

The Course Review and Approval Guidelines, from which the Variable Topic and Experimental Courses policy originated, were developed during the 1978-79 academic year, reviewed by College councils, and approved by the President's Council and President Romberg for implementation in the fall semester of 1979.

In 1990 new guidelines concerning the cross-listing of courses were added. These new guidelines were endorsed by the Council of Academic Deans and approved by Vice President Boxer on August 22, 1990.

The Guidelines were revised in May 1991 to include a section on cross-listed courses and to incorporate the Academic Senate policy that provided Guiding Principles for Review and Approval of New or Revised Courses and mandated final adjudication of course disputes by a faculty committee (see Academic Senate Policy S91-170, Section VII).

The Guidelines were reviewed in fall 1997 and were updated to include the Academic Senate Policy S90-126 (Paired Courses). The section on the College of Extended Learning (summer, winter, or Contract Courses) was rewritten to incorporate the revisions to Extended Learning courses. A section on the College of Extended Learning (CEU courses) was also added. Modifications were made to the Consultation and Appeal Process.

The Guidelines are a compilation of executive orders, directives, and individual policies that were not formalized as a whole. Given the impact that definitions of courses have on curriculum, in March 2016, the Curriculum Review and Approval Committee (CRAC) approved the following policy.

### A. Variable Topics – Characteristics and Conditions

1. A Variable Topics course is a generic permanent course with a consistent course description and learning goals. All topics offered under this generic course/course description/course number will share the same learning outcomes, but may feature different content based on the needs of students and department (i.e., all versions or sections of this course share learning outcomes regardless of the topic).
2. The Topic course number is assigned according to the generic number previously approved. A generic course is established by filing a regular permanent course proposal form and stating the primary objectives and intended goals; no course outline is required. (Note: it is expected that the title for each topic will clearly identify the nature of the course content, as individual topic descriptions will not be published in the *Bulletin*.)
3. The generic course description must specify repeatability, i.e., whether the course may be repeated as topics vary for X number of units, or whether specific topics may be repeated with consent of instructor.
4. The number of units, pre-requisites, grading basis, and course classification characteristics identified for the generic will apply to all topical sections, (e.g., Topics in Literature is 3 units, which means whatever topic is offered in a given semester will be 3 units, etc.).
5. Variable topic titles must be approved by the Department Chair/Program Director and Associate Dean. Titles of the versions will be shared with the Course Review Committee as information items to consider redundancy/overlap with an existing course/discipline. If concerns are raised, a description and/or course outline may be requested.
6. Different topical versions may be offered as needed.
7. Variable topics cannot be cross-listed, nor can they be paired.

### B. Experimental Courses – Characteristics and Conditions

1. Experimental courses are offered for a short time with a predetermined sunset. If a program wants to offer the course after it has been inactivated, the department can make the course a Topics course or submit a course proposal for a permanent course.

2. It is proposed and offered on a short-life basis by an authorized academic unit of the University.
3. It may be established to meet any number of professional purposes including:
  - a. Meeting a current need in the discipline;
  - b. Accommodating the expertise of a visiting, temporary, or new faculty member;
  - c. Experimenting with a body of knowledge to determine whether or not a regular permanent course should be established.
4. It is identified by a unique title that clearly identifies the nature of the course content.
5. Experimental titles must be approved by the Department Chair/Program Director and Associate Dean. Titles of the versions will be shared with the Course Review Committee as information items to consider redundancy/overlap with an existing course/discipline. If concerns are raised, a description and/or course outline may be requested.
6. It is approved for offering in a specified term only; however, it may be repeated in the immediate following term provided that the Office of Academic Planning is notified.
7. At the end of the second semester in which the course is offered, an Experimental course is automatically inactivated. To offer such a course again, it must be submitted as a regular permanent course, or become a rotating topic (variable topic).
8. The Experimental course number is assigned by level as follows:

Lower Division	277
Upper Division	377/677
Graduate Level	877

**Signed Memo:**

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