

Queen's University
Senate Committee on Academic Procedures

COURSE VARIANTS

January 2013

Background

In December 2012, the Senate Committee on Academic Procedures (SCAP) received the following motion, as referred from Senate:

Be it resolved that all course variants (i.e., courses modified from their original or on-campus formats so that they may be listed or advertised as online, as distance, as blended, or as taught in shortened duration for Queen's-Blyth or other off-campus venues) be designated with a suffix to the original course-number, and that the suffix designate the mode of the variant, e.g., O=Online, BL=Blended, D=Distance, etc.

Rationale: The use of such suffixes was standard practice until very recently. For example, ENGL 250 is a lecture course in English. The correspondence version used to be designated ENGL 250S. A night-course version was designated ENGL 250X. These designations appeared on transcripts.

The suffixes served to preserve important information on the transcript, e.g., whether a student's credits were earned on campus, online, by correspondence, etc. And as noted in last month's Senate, "the Association of Registrars of Universities and Colleges of Canada's National Transcript Guide states that 'The transcript should contain a complete and accurate history of the academic path of a given student in a particular postsecondary institution'.

Analysis and Discussion

The motion was reviewed during SCAP's December 2012 and January 2013 meetings and the major points from that discussion are outlined below.

The goal of the motion (the completeness and accuracy of the official transcript) was considered, with some members questioning whether the indication of the mode of instruction of a particular course was a meaningful and relevant piece of information for the official transcript. Concern was expressed that external reviewers could be confused by the notations or make value judgments based on the mode of instruction of a course. Committee members also expressed concern that including notations at the end of some course codes may create confusion for students during the course selection process, since multi-term course codes already make use of the letters 'A' and 'B' to indicate the first term and second term of a multi-term course.

The University Registrar reported on the options within the PeopleSoft Student system to accommodate the proposed change. The system already has "instruction mode" functionality that displays to students information on whether a class is offered online or on campus. If course variants were approved, further study would be required to determine the implications from a system perspective. The University Registrar also informed Committee members of the content of item 4.2 of the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada's *National Transcript Guide for Use in Canadian Postsecondary Institutions*, which states that

“while methods of [course] delivery are recommended for the [student information] database, they are not recommended for the transcript.”

Lastly, SCAP members discussed the general concept of curriculum variation between classes that have the same course number and which body on campus is responsible for ensuring that a course is being taught to the standards by which it was approved (e.g. SCAP, SCAD, Faculty or departmental curriculum committees, instructors, etc.). It was acknowledged that variations already exist between classes with the same course number regardless of the mode of instruction and based simply on the instructor. This additional information is not currently on the transcript, nor does it seem that there is good reason for it to be included if the course meets curriculum approval. Committee members felt that the issue of whether a course that has been taught on-campus in previous terms could be modified and offered as an online course without going through the curriculum approvals process is a decision that should be made by Faculty Boards and their equivalents in the various Faculties/Schools on campus.

Conclusion

At its meeting on January 17, 2013 the Senate Committee on Academic Procedures unanimously recommended, based on its analysis and discussion, that the motion not be approved and that the matter be forwarded to Senate for its consideration.

Membership

T. Alm, Interim University Registrar

L. Burlock, B.A. '14

R. Coupland, Office of the University Registrar (Secretary)

C. Esselmont, PhD candidate, Department of Philosophy

H. Everson, Faculty of Arts and Science

J. Mennell, Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

J. Morelli, Department of Physics, Engineering Physics, and Astronomy

T. Shearer, School of Business (Chair)