

Adopted: June 2, 1998

**ACADEMIC SENATE  
Of  
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY  
San Luis Obispo, CA**

**AS-503-98/CC  
RESOLUTION ON  
EXPERIMENTAL COURSES**

- WHEREAS, Experimental or X courses circumvent the peer-review process in that they are not often reviewed by department, college, or university curriculum committees; and
- WHEREAS, Experimental courses, because they are not listed in the catalog, lead to many serious problems with communication of course content to students, transfer credit calculation, automated degree audit, graduate school or employer evaluation of transcripts, etc.; and
- WHEREAS, The established definition of experimental courses is that they “provide an opportunity for experimentation in education without delays that are necessary before new courses and programs can be reviewed for inclusion in the University Catalog” (CAM 490.4); therefore, be it
- RESOLVED: That faculty be encouraged, but not required, to offer specialized courses under variable-content/focused subtopic course rubrics, or as selected advanced topics courses (470s or 570s). Such courses do get listed in the catalog, and the particular subtitle for the course does appear on the student’s transcript; and, be it further
- RESOLVED: That faculty propose a course as experimental only in compelling circumstances. Such compelling circumstances might include the pressing need to offer a course in a newly important subject area, or the sudden availability of a visiting faculty member from another university to teach a new course in his/her specialty; and, be it further
- RESOLVED: That experimental courses receive as many different levels of peer review as time permits, with the minimum being that they are at least reviewed by the Academic Senate Curriculum Committee in order to avoid potential curriculum disputes between colleges or departments.

Recommended effective date: Fall 2000.

Proposed by: The Academic Senate Curriculum Committee  
Date: May 12, 1998  
Revised: May 19, 1998  
Revised: May 28, 1998

- SOME COURSE DEFINITIONS  
(to accompany the Resolutions on Experimental Courses)

Experimental courses provide an opportunity for experimentation in education without delays that are necessary before new courses and programs can be reviewed for inclusion in the university catalog.

Experimental courses are submitted to the department chair and college dean for their recommendations, and to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for approval. Approval is for a maximum of two years.

Experimental courses are designated with an "X" and appear first under a department's offerings in the class schedule. The particular subtitle for each X course appears in the schedule and on the student's transcript. X courses do not appear in the catalog.

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Selected Advanced Topics courses (470s or 570s) are generic courses available in all academic programs. The course descriptions and prerequisite (consent of instructor) for most departments are identical, regardless of ENGL or ENGR. Because the 470/570 courses are so vague and open-ended, a specific and complete course proposal needs to be developed and approved for each subtopic (same paperwork as for a new course).

Selected advanced topics courses need approval from the department curriculum committee, the department chair, the college curriculum committee, the college dean, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Approval is for one quarter only.

The particular subtopic of each selected advanced topic course appears in the class schedule and on the student's transcript. The generic course description appears in the catalog.

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Variable Content/Focused Subtopic Courses are different from 470/570s because they have a more focused subtopic than the generic, open-ended courses. For example, ENGL 439 Significant British Writers could focus on Milton one quarter, and on Virginia Woolf the next quarter.

Particular subtopics for focused subtopic courses need approval from the department chair, the college dean, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The particular subtopic is valid for the catalog life of the course.

The particular subtopic of each focused subtopic course appears in the class schedule and on the student's transcript. A more general—but still somewhat specific—course description appears in the catalog. For example, ENGL 439 Significant British Writers: Selected British writers, as individual writers or in groups.

**RECEIVED**

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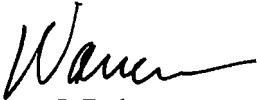
SAN LUIS OBISPO  
CA 93407

State of California  
**M e m o r a n d u m**

**Academic Senate**

To: Myron Hood  
Chair, Academic Senate

Date: September 18, 1998

From:   
Warren J. Baker  
President

Copies: Paul J. Zingg  
Harvey Greenwald

Subject: AS-503-98/CC—Resolution on Experimental Courses

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I am pleased to approve the above-referenced Senate Resolution to be effective with Fall Quarter of 2000-2001. This Resolution should enhance the peer review process of experimental courses to insure that academic integrity and quality are maintained and unnecessary duplication of courses is eliminated. Minimizing the use of experimental courses should also assist in the evaluation of transfer credits, the production of transcripts for graduate schools and employers, and the advisement of students.

The Academic Senate and the Curriculum Committee are to be commended for reviewing this issue and for improving the process to further strengthen the academic quality of our programs.