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Name:	Senate Policy on Special Topics and Directed Study (Reading) Courses
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Preamble

One of the core activities of the University is to offer academic programs leading to degrees, certificates and diplomas. These programs are composed of a set of individual courses. Oversight of these courses and programs is a shared responsibility of faculty, Departments, Faculties and Senate. New programs and courses as well as changes to programs and courses go through a rigorous review and approval process starting with the Department, then Faculty and then Senate. At each of these levels, sub-committees such as Department, Faculty or Senate Curriculum committees are involved.

The review processes ensure that courses and programs

- meet specified program goals and student learning outcomes,
- have appropriate content, structure and delivery methods,
- satisfy identified student needs/demand,
- are appropriately resourced, and
- fit within the broader institutional context.

Although this rigorous review process ensures the academic integrity of our offerings, it does not always allow us to be nimble. To enhance our responsiveness, at the course level, the University permits the offering of Special Topics and Directed Study courses.

Special Topics Courses

In preparation of the timetable for the upcoming year, a Department may offer one or more Special Topics courses in exceptional circumstances. Typical cases include:

- a visiting scholar
- piloting a course that may be offered as a regular course in the subsequent academic year

- a course that is timely due to unique events in the year (e.g., centenary event)

Disciplines that have many courses in the Calendar (and archived) that are not offered on a regular basis, should consider offering these courses before making the case to introduce a special topics course. In keeping with the concept of a "Special" course, these courses should not be repeated unless it has been many years since the last offering. New tenure track faculty should be encouraged to become familiar with the Department's approved courses before being permitted to propose special topics courses.

The course is included in the annual Department timetable submission to the Dean and requires the authorization of the Dean like all other courses in the timetable.

Faculty wishing to offer a Special Topics course must propose the course to the Department and Dean following the normal course submission requirements delineated by Senate (reference: Saint Mary's University website/Academic Policies and Procedures/Senate ByLaws/Curriculum Committee).

Note:

The course number is selected from the range 3801-3849, 4801-4849 or 6801-6849. The same number should not be re-used until all others in the range have been used. A course title is assigned that reflects the focus of the course.

Directed Study (Reading) Courses

When there is the need to offer a special course for one student, then it is more appropriate to propose the course as a Directed Study or Directed Reading course, rather than a Special Topics course. If the course is already listed as a regular course in the Academic Calendar, then no special approval is required and it may be added to the timetable with an enrolment limit of zero and the student registers via an override by the instructor.

Like Special Topics courses, Directed Study courses should be offered only in exceptional circumstances. However, unlike Special Topics courses, the "exceptional circumstances" should be dictated by the student's situation.

Authorization for the offering of a Directed Study course is very similar to that for a Special Topics course. It differs in that the authorization for the course also serves as registration authorization for the particular student. For this reason, a special form is used (attached).

The form requires the course number, credit hours, title, description, instructional format, and budgetary requirements as with any new course proposal. Approval is required from both the Department Chairperson and the Dean. The instructor should separately submit a statement explaining the reason for the course, as this is also a normal requirement for proposing a new course.

Directed Study courses must also comply with all University academic regulations. In particular, Academic Regulation 4 requires that on the first day of class students be given a written statement of the grading system to be used in the course. A copy is also to be given to the Dean. For Directed Study courses, the instructor is required to provide this information with the course proposal form.

Version History

Version	Date Changed	Updated by	Description of Change
1.0	November 16, 2012	Senate Curriculum Committee	Document creation.