

Dear Members of the Common Course Numbering Task Force,

Thank you for inviting Los Rios Community College District curriculum representatives to talk about our experience with our local Course Renumbering Project (c. 2002) and ongoing efforts to maintain and evolve our numbering system.

Attached please find the Los Rios Thematic Numbering Style Guide that guided our original work along with some followup notes of how the systems changed and evolved during and after implementation.

Sincerely,

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Los Rios Thematic Numbering Style Guide

Effective Fall 2003

Introduction

Colleges in Los Rios use a common numbering system for all courses. This Style Guide describes the necessary format for choosing an appropriate course identifier.

Some Basic Terminology

Here are a few terms that will be useful for understanding the Los Rios Thematic Numbering System:

catalog department

Courses at all Los Rios colleges are organized under major headings called "catalog departments." These are the major headings that are found in the college catalogs. A few examples include English, Mathematics, Chemistry, Legal Assisting, Art, Psychology. Although there is some overlap, catalog departments are not equivalent to academic departments. Catalog departments are simply useful divisions that help students identify courses that they might be interested in. For example, Geography and Geology are separate catalog departments, but at some Los Rios colleges, the Geography and Geology faculty are in one academic department--Earth Science--with one department spokesperson.

subject designator

Specializations within a catalog department are called subject designators. For example, the catalog department Mathematics contains two subject designators: Mathematics (MATH) and Statistics (STAT); the Music department has four subject designators: Music Fundamentals/History and Literature (MUFHL), Music Instrument/Voice Instruction (MUIVI), Music Performance (MUP), and Music Specializations (MUSM). In many cases, the catalog department will have only specialization: the Journalism department has Journalism (JOUR) as its sole subject designator.

subject prefix

A subject prefix is simply an abbreviation for a subject designator. It must consist of five or fewer upper case characters. A space may be used, but no other punctuation or symbol may be used. For example, the subject designator History has prefix 'HIST'; Computer Information Science - Programming has prefix 'CISP.'

course number

A course number is a number that follows the subject designator. For example, the '20' in MATH 20, the '103' in MATH 103, and the '420' in MATH 420 are examples of course numbers in the Mathematics subject designator.

course identifier

A subject designator (or prefix) together with a course number produce a unique course identifier. For example, Psychology 300 (or PSYC 300) is the Los Rios course identifier for an introductory, transfer-level course in Psychology.

Course Identifier Format

Every course offered by Los Rios colleges is assigned its own course identifier. Using the following guidelines, college and district curriculum committees, under the authority of the Academic Senates, are responsible for assigning appropriate course identifiers:

Subject Designator

Each Los Rios course must have a designator selected from the official list of subject designators and prefixes (<http://www.www.www>). For example, Applied Psychological Principles is a course within the Psychology (PSYC) designator, and Powerplant Theory and Maintenance is a course within the Aeronautics (AERO) designator. In many cases, there will be only one choice of designator/prefix for a given course. When there is a choice, the new course should have the same designator/prefix as related courses already in the curriculum.

Course Numbers

To distinguish courses within each subject designator, a number from 1 to 499 is used. For instance, MATH 1, MATH 2, ..., MATH 499 are all valid subject identifiers within the Mathematics designator.

Number Ranges

The general type of course—basic skills, college-level non-transfer, or transfer—is determined by three course number ranges:

Range	Course Type	Example
1-99	Basic Skill and Developmental Courses	ENGL 21 (Spelling); MATH 34 (Prealgebra)
100-299	A.A./A.S. Degree Applicable, Non-transfer Level Courses	ENGL 142 (Writing in the Workplace); MATH 130 (Intermediate Algebra)
300-499	Transfer-level Courses	ENGL 300 (College Composition); MATH 410 (Differential Equations)

These ranges are firm, and no exceptions are allowed. For example, if a nontransferable course becomes transferable, then it **must** be renumbered between 300 and 499.

Thematic Blocks

Within a given subject designator, numbers are organized in thematic blocks of 10. Each course is grouped with related courses in a particular thematic block. An example of a set of thematic blocks is given below for Anthropology.

Anthropology (ANTH)	
Block	Description
300-309	Physical Anthropology
310-319	Cultural Anthropology
320-329	Specific Cultures
330-339	Archaeology
480-489	Honors
490-499	Reserved

Thematic blocks allow for **structured growth**. New courses proposed within Los Rios are assigned a number in an appropriate thematic block based upon course content. Additional thematic blocks can be added in growing departments.

Natural Order

To the greatest extent possible, a course's number should reflect its place in the curriculum sequence. More intensive or rigorous academic offerings should have higher course numbers than less intensive ones. Courses with prerequisites should have higher numbers than their prerequisites. For example, MATH 120 (Intermediate Algebra) is a prerequisite for Math 330 (Trigonometry); Math 370 (Precalculus) is a prerequisite for Math 400 (Calculus). It is understood that this principle only makes sense in departments with a sequenced curriculum (e.g., MATH, PHYS, SPAN). In other departments, the number order only reflects grouping into thematic blocks and does not imply any message about intensity or rigor (e.g., E LIT, DANCE, FITNS, T A).

Honors Thematic Block

In each subject designator, the 480-489 block of numbers is set aside for honors courses. For example, Philosophy has the following honors courses: PHIL 480 (Classical Philosophy -

Honors), PHIL 481 (History of Modern Philosophy - Honors), PHIL 482 (Law, Justice, and Punishment - Honors). All honors courses should be numbered in the 480 block.

Reserved Thematic Block

The 290 and 490 blocks are reserved in each subject designator for Topics, Independent Study, Teaching Assistant, Internship, Work Experience, and Experimental Offering courses.

Reserved Courses	
Number (Non-transfer / Transfer)	Definition
294 / 494: Topics in <i>Subject</i>	A Topics course has a consistent pedagogy as described by a complete course outline of record -- but with a focus area which changes from term to term. This course may be developed in cooperation with industry to meet specialized training needs. In general, the topics discussed in this course are not included in current curriculum offerings. Topics courses may be repeated four times up to a maximum of 12 units, with no duplication of topics.
295 / 495: Independent Studies in <i>Subject</i>	An Independent Studies course involves an individual student or small group of students in study, research, or activities beyond the scope of regularly offered courses, pursuant to an agreement among the college, faculty member, and student(s).
296 / 496: Teaching Assistant in <i>Subject</i>	A Teaching Assistant course provides students with opportunities to expand their understanding of a particular subject. Students work with individual and small groups of students in a classroom or lab setting.
297 / 497: Internship in <i>Subject</i>	An Internship course provides students with a supervised instructional experience in a field setting. Interns generally perform structured activities as a volunteer rather than in a paid position. The exact requirements for an Internship course are governed by California Title V regulations and Los Rios board policy.
298 / 498: Work Experience in <i>Subject</i>	A Work Experience course allows students to earn college credit by combining volunteer or paid work experience and classroom training. Using their jobs as learning situations, the students join with their employers and the college in establishing learning objectives to be accomplished during the semester. The exact requirements for a Work Experience course, including prerequisites and units-for-hours formulas, are governed by California Title V regulations and Los Rios board policy.

299 / 499:
Experimental
Offering in
Subject

An Experimental Offering is a course that is offered on a trial basis. In general, an experimental course is one for which full information on some approval criterion, such as feasibility or need, cannot be determined until the course is actually offered on a trial basis. An Experimental Offering should generally be submitted for approval as a regular course, or discontinued, within one year.

If a department needs additional Topics courses beyond 294/494, the numbers 293/493, 292/492, 291/491 should be used in that order. For example, in English Literature (E LIT), 'Topics in English Literature' is E LIT 494; but additional topics courses would be numbered like this: 'Short Story Topics' would be E LIT 493; and 'Topics in the Novel' would E LIT 492.

The numbers 90, 290, and 490 may be used as placeholder numbers. Students enroll in these courses initially, but then are re-enrolled in a standard course based upon their progress. For example, MATH 290 is Individualized Mathematics. Students enroll in the 290 course initially, but, based upon their progress in an individualized format, they are given credit for MATH 30 Prealgebra, MATH 100 Algebra, or MATH 120 Intermediate Algebra.

In departments with significant basic skills offerings, the 90-99 block may be reserved for self-study and tutoring courses.

Modularized Components of an Existing Course

Modularized components of an existing course are designated with the course number of the existing course followed by a decimal, then a number from 1-9. With this type of course, students receive credit for the existing course once they have completed each of its modular components. Each module is treated as a separate course. If the modules must be taken in order, then the decimal number should reflect that order. For example, the Psychology 360 (Psychology of Death and Dying, 3 units) is offered as a sequence of 6 modules: PSYC 360.1 (Introduction to Thanatology, 0.5 units), PSYC 360.2 (Fear of Death, 0.5 units), PSYC 360.3 (Dying as a Process, 0.5 units), PSYC 360.4 (Death and the Family, 0.5 units), PSYC 360.5 (Volitional Death, 0.5 units), PSYC 360.6 (Economics and Legalities of Death, 0.5 units). Successful completion of PSYC 360.1, 360.2, 360.3, 360.4, 360.5, 360.6 is the same as successfully completing PSYC 360, the 3-unit course.

The decimal convention for modularized courses may only be used when an existing course is modularized. This convention should be used only for modules, not as a method for distinguishing courses.

Course Letter Suffixes Not Used

Previous practice allowed letter suffixes to be appended to course numbers. This convention is not used under Thematic Numbering.

Sacramento Regional Public Safety Training Center Courses

Courses offered at the Public Safety Training Center are substantially different in scope and purpose than the basic skills, college-level non-transfer, and transfer courses offered by other Los Rios academic departments. To reflect their unique differences, courses from the Center are numbered from 1000 to 1999. Other than use of four-digit course numbers, Center courses are numbered similarly to other Los Rios courses. Thematic blocks are used to organize Center courses, and prerequisite order is reflected in the sequence of course numbers.

Extension and Community Education Courses

Some Los Rios colleges offer noncredit, community education courses through their extension programs. Like the Public Safety Training Center, these courses differ significantly in scope and purpose from the courses offered by other Los Rios academic departments. For this reason, extension courses are numbered from 2000-2999. Other than use of four-digit course numbers, extension courses are numbered similarly to other Los Rios courses. Thematic blocks are used to organize extension courses, and prerequisite order is reflected in the sequence of course numbers.

Los Rios Coordination

Similar courses may be offered by more than one Los Rios college. The following guidelines describe how these courses are coordinated under thematic numbering

Thematic Numbering of Related Courses

Related Los Rios courses, no matter at which college they are offered, are assigned to an appropriate thematic block. For example, MATH 330 (Trigonometry, 3 units, ARC), MATH 333 (Trigonometry, 4 units, SCC), and MATH 335 (Trigonometry with College Algebra, 5 units, CRC, FLC) are all Trigonometry-level courses in the "330 thematic block." Differences in the courses reflect the adaptation of individual curricula to the needs of the local student population served by the college, and yet, the courses share a common core content and a common prerequisite (MATH 110 Geometry and Math 120 Intermediate Algebra). Under Thematic Numbering, "330 block" Trigonometry courses can easily be seen as comparable.

Rule of Five

A course is considered the same across Los Rios if it satisfies the following five criteria:

- same course number
- same course title
- same number of units
- same academic level (basic skills, college non-transfer, transfer)
- similar, but not necessarily identical, course descriptions and course content

In practice, the Rule of Five simply means that, if a course is offered by more than one college and has the same identifier, it is treated as the exact same course at each Los Rios college and is

presented as being the same course to our articulation partners at four-year institutions. Courses that differ on one of the criteria in the Rule of Five are required to have different course identifiers. Here are some examples illustrating the Rule of Five:

Common Course Identifier. College Composition is a 3-unit, transfer course that is offered by all Los Rios colleges. With the exception of minor differences in course description and course outline, the content of the courses is essentially the same throughout Los Rios. College Composition satisfies the Rule of Five and uses the common course identifier ENGL 300.

Change in Units at One College To meet local needs, CRC would like to offer ENGL 21 (Spelling) as a 3-unit class instead of as a 2-unit class as it is at ARC. Colleagues at ARC, FLC, and SCC concur that it makes sense for CRC to create 3-unit version of the ENGL 21 course; however, the existing 2-unit ENGL 21 continues to work fine for ARC. Under the Rule of Five, the course proposed by CRC is not the same as the ENGL 21 course currently being offered by ARC because it doesn't have the same number of units. Therefore, CRC will use a new course identifier in the same thematic block as the existing course, perhaps ENGL 28.

Change in Title at One College To create a new focus in its French language program, SCC wants to change the title of FREN 100 (Conversational French, Elementary) to Everyday French Language, Life, and Culture, Part 1. Colleagues at ARC, CRC, and FLC concur that it makes sense for SCC to create a version of the FREN 100 course with the new title; however, the existing title meets the needs of ARC, CRC, and FLC and they don't plan to change their course titles. Under the Rule of Five, SCC is proposing a new French course entitled Everyday French Language, Life, and Culture, Part 1. As a new course, it will be assigned a new course identifier in the same thematic block as the existing course, perhaps FREN 105.

Substantial Change to Catalog Description or Course Content at One College In response to student needs, FLC would like to split the 5-unit Math 120 (Intermediate Algebra) into a two-semester sequence rather than the one-semester format offered at the other Los Rios colleges. Colleagues at ARC, CRC, and SCC agree that the two-semester format would work best at FLC, but they prefer their one-semester version. Under the Rule of Five, FLC is proposing two new courses with different identifiers (MATH 123, MATH 124), different titles (Intermediate Algebra, Part 1 and Intermediate Algebra, Part 2), and new units (3 units, 3 units, respectively).

Developments and Modifications of the Los Rios Course Numbering System During and After Implementation (2003-Present)

- **Subject Designators and Prefixes Have Changed for Some Departments.** The Course Renumbering Task group created draft prefixes and numbers for all Los Rios courses and presented them to departments for approval. In some cases, the prefixes and numbers were accepted as proposed but in other cases the departments modified them to meet their current and projected growth needs, or to better reflect their professional understanding of how their discipline should be organized. For example, in English, the proposed designators of ENGL and E LIT were expanded and coordinated to ENGWR (English — Writing), ENGCW (English — Creative Writing), ENGLB (English — Laboratory), ENGLT (English — Literature), ENGRD (English — Reading), and ENGED (English — Education).

Departments sometimes decide to add new designators and prefixes to their existing set of prefixes. For example, in the last 15 years, CIS has added Computer Information Science – Data Science (CISD), Computer Information Science — Maker (CISM), and Computer Information Science — Security (CISS). In other cases, the discipline’s preferred nomenclature changes. Recently, Sign Language Studies (SILA) was renamed Deaf Culture and American Sign Language Studies (DEAF).

- **The original guidelines referenced a website of official subject designators and prefixes; however, a separate website wasn’t needed as that information is maintained within our curriculum management system Socrates.**
- **In practice, reserved numbers 295/495, 298/498, and 299/499 are still in use in Los Rios.** The other reserved numbers in the 290/490 block have been deprecated. The Honors Thematic Block of 480-489 is still in active use across Los Rios departments.
- **The use of decimal fractions after a course number to indicate a modularized course has gone out of favor and is no longer in active use in the district.** Instead, departments created regular numbers for each module, or combined them into a single course.
- **The Rule of Five is maintained in two ways.** Our curriculum management software Socrates keeps the course number, course title, and the units the same across shared courses. Modifications to these three items can only occur in the software when all of the impacted colleges agree to the change. The academic level (college non-transfer, transfer) and the course content among potentially shared courses have to be verified during the curriculum process.

- **Number ranges that were set aside for basic skills courses are now being used for corequisite support courses.**
- **At one time, Los Rios colleges offered not-for-credit extension (“students charged a fee”) courses;** however, those programs have largely ceased operation and number ranges for them are not being used.