

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA ASHEVILLE
FACULTY SENATE

Senate Document Number SD4323S
Date of Senate Approval 03/30/2023

Statement of Faculty Senate Action:

FWDC 8 / APC 32:

**Revision of Special Topics policy
(Faculty Handbook Section [3.1.4.1.3](#))**

Effective Date: Immediately

Summary: This document updates and clarifies the policy on Special Topics (ST) course limits before they are required to be added to the catalog.

Revise handbook as follows:

Remove from the handbook the first paragraph under the following heading:

3.1.4.1.3 Independent and Special Topics Courses

When in the judgment of the Department Chair/Program Director there is a curricular or student need coupled with available faculty expertise, Special Topics Courses may be part of a program's set of scheduled courses. When scheduled, these courses are part of a faculty member's normal teaching load. Ordinarily, a special topics course which is offered for more than two consecutive years is to be considered for inclusion in the list of regular courses found in the catalog.

Replace with:

3.1.4.1.3 Independent and Special Topics Courses

When in the judgment of the Department Chair/Program Director there is a curricular need coupled with available faculty expertise, Special Topics (**ST**) Courses may be part of a program's set of scheduled courses. When scheduled, these courses are part of a faculty member's normal teaching load. **Before a particular ST course can be offered a third time, the Dean's office will remind the Chair of that department or program director that they must submit a proposal to APC to seek a permanent course number, to be approved by the Faculty Senate. If the ST course does not fall within a department or program, the Dean's Office will remind the instructor of the ST course that they must submit a proposal to APC. If a ST course has been taught three or more times, a grace period may be requested from the Dean's office.**

Impact: In order to enforce this policy, some coordination between the Registrar's Office and the Deans will be necessary. Lynne Horgan has agreed to run a report at the beginning of each semester that lists ST courses by Department. This list will be sent to Lisa Sellers for archiving and to the Deans, who will contact Chairs of departments with ST courses that are approaching the 3-time limit. Once a ST course has been taught twice, the Deans will give fair warning to Dept. Chairs to ensure they submit a catalog change proposal to APC the following year. For those ST courses that have already been taught 3 times or more (which is possible as this policy becomes enforced), Deans can grant a grace period for one time.

Rationale: There is ambiguity in the current policy regarding the limit to the number of times that Special Topics (ST) courses may be taught before they are required to be added to the catalog. As written in the handbook currently, a ST course "which is offered for more than two consecutive years is to be considered for inclusion in the list of regular courses found in the catalog." The unofficial rule that has been repeated every year is that ST courses can only be taught three times before they are required to enter the catalog. This proposal seeks to clarify this unofficial rule and reiterate the original intent of this policy.

This policy is important for several reasons.

- a) *It provides oversight of a regularly taught course through the APC.* Only Department Chairs need approve of ST courses, but courses that are a regular curriculum offering should be approved by the APC and the full Senate;
- b) *It helps students be better informed of course options and to plan out their future semesters.* Since ST courses are not necessarily taught according to a fixed rotation, students may not be able to depend on them being offered;
- c) *It helps with faculty advising of students.* Similar to above, ST courses that are not part of a fixed rotation are not necessarily dependable options for advising;
- d) *It helps the Registrar's Office with GradPlan functionality.* ST courses often fulfill degree requirements, but manual entry is required to have it reflect properly on the students' GradPlan.