WVU Subject Code Policy

Background

A subject code is a letter-combination used to designate the area of study in a course. It precedes the course number. For example, in course number HIST 152 the subject code HIST stands for History.

While subject codes are not unique to West Virginia University, the exact combinations of subject codes and course numbers are unique to the institution. Subject codes are designed to be easily distinguishable to the public who may receive and need to interpret a transcript. Subject codes are useful for the general classification of course data, but are less useful for specific course content. Course titles are the best indicators of course content.

Guidelines concerning subject codes

It is not necessary for subject codes to mirror academic programs (i.e. majors, minors, areas of emphasis, certificates) or departments (e.g. English). Therefore, changing or establishing a subject code should have a substantial justification for necessity. The descriptor of a subject code (e.g. "History") should be as concise and general as possible, and should represent widely accepted fields of study. Requests for new subject codes must provide a strong rationale for the request. A strong rationale might include evidence of widespread use of the proposed subject code by existing programs at other institutions. Creating a more specific demarcation in an existing subject code that already contains the general content of existing or new courses is not a sufficient rationale.

Subject code approvals and changes

Requests for new or changed subject codes must come from an Associate Dean and require approval from the Office of the University Registrar. This approval must be obtained before submitting a course proposal through the CIM system to obtain Faculty Senate approval.