Course Level Uniform Numbering Policy

Custodian of Policy: Registrar

Relevant Minnesota State System Policy: 3.36

Relevant Procedures: Minnesota State System Procedure

Effective Date:

Last Review: Fall 2024

Next Review: Fall 2031

The following course levels and uniform course numbers will be used to ensure consistency throughout the university curriculum.

**Numbering System**

001-099 Developmental or basic skills courses. These courses are not applicable to Minnesota State University Moorhead degree requirements.

100-199 Undergraduate courses primarily for students in their freshman year.

200-299 Undergraduate courses primarily for students in their sophomore year.

300-399 Undergraduate courses primarily for students in their junior year.

400-499 Undergraduate courses primarily for students in their senior year. These courses may be dual listed with 500 and 600-level graduate courses.

500-599 Entry level graduate courses. These courses may be dual listed with 400-level undergraduate courses and 600-level graduate courses.

600-699 Graduate courses. Undergraduate enrollment is only by exception.

700-799 Graduate courses designed for graduate students only.

**Explanation of Course Levels**

1. Lower-Division Courses:

100-299 These courses are generally considered lower division and typically require no or limited prerequisite background in the discipline. These courses are introductory or part of a series of basic courses in a discipline.

Lower division courses increase the knowledge students have of subjects with which they are already familiar, introduce them to new subjects, and/or establish a foundation for study of a major subject in depth. They are courses that may be counted in majors, minors, electives, and/or the Liberal Arts and Science curriculum. They are used at the basic level in baccalaureate programs and are used in the Associate of Arts Degree.

Lower division courses usually are tightly structured with the expectation students are to receive considerable instruction guidance in the learning process. Instruction at this level normally is informational and emphasizes learning skills; it usually entails the use of text materials or resources provided by the instructor or acquired through library or other resources. The intellectual skills emphasized in lower division courses include comprehension, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and application of knowledge, but these competencies are not stressed to the same degree as they are in upper division courses. Evaluation of student performance at this level typically tests information, concepts, and skills, but may include aspects identified for upper division courses as well.

1. Upper-Division Courses:

300-499 Courses at the 300 and 400-level are considered upper-division courses. Typically, they build on the background of courses at the lower division. They may have one or both of the following characteristics:

1. They require analysis, synthesis, and/or integration of knowledge and skills from several specific areas in a discipline or from related disciplines.
2. They are built on a foundation of prerequisite lower division courses in liberal studies, a specific discipline, or a related field of study.

Upper division courses enable students to study a major field in depth by building upon and integrating the knowledge gained in lower division courses. Upper-division courses may also serve as an introduction to sub-fields within a discipline. Upper-division courses are characterized by a more flexible structure that allows for a variety of approaches to the subject matter, a wide range of course material, an emphasis on independent study and/or research in the laboratory, library, studio, or community. Students are expected to accept increasing responsibility for their own learning both inside and outside the classroom. Upper-division courses typically emphasize comprehension, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and application of knowledge. Evaluation of student performance at this level stresses such outcomes as comprehension and understanding of concepts, the ability to solve problems, and the ability to integrate knowledge.

Upper-division courses may be counted in majors, minors, electives, and/or the Liberal Arts and Science Curriculum. They are used at the upper level in baccalaureate degree programs.

1. Graduate Courses:

500-799 Courses at the 500, 600, and 700-level are considered graduate courses. Typically, graduate courses are restricted to students who have successfully completed a baccalaureate degree. No more than 50 percent of the credit hours in any graduate program can be at the 500-level. They also may have one or more of the following characteristics:

1. They typically build upon a foundation of undergraduate courses in a single or related discipline.
2. They require intellectual maturity of students and stress independent study.
3. They emphasize the use of information resources, studio, laboratory, community, and field-based facilities in ways commensurate with the level of learning.

The primary function of graduate courses is to broaden the perspective and deepen the knowledge students have of a particular discipline or professional field of study, or to provide students preparation in an advanced professional field that requires foundational knowledge and experience in a related discipline or field of study. They are used in master's and specialist programs and may be used for special post-baccalaureate certificate programs and studies.

Graduate courses are structured in a manner that allows for a variety of approaches to the subject matter, a wide range of source material, considerable student interaction, and a significant emphasis on independent study and/or research in the library, laboratory, studio, or community. They are designed to extend the knowledge and intellectual maturity of students beyond the baccalaureate level. They are intended for students who are capable of analyzing, exploring, questioning, evaluating, and synthesizing knowledge. Evaluation of student performance in graduate courses entails a variety of means and is commensurate with the level of complexity of these courses.

**Multiple Numbered Courses**  
  
Multiple numbered courses are used to manage curriculum and faculty assignments. In this approach, a given body of content is available in separately approved courses at the two different levels. It is assumed each of those courses is needed, one for each level of curriculum. However, in the context of curriculum and resource management, the institution may make the decision to teach those two courses simultaneously by one faculty member. Different levels of expectations would be stated for the students in separate course syllabi or in a segment of a common syllabus. The syllabi are required to outline these different expectations based on the characteristics described in A, B and C above and would be made available and on file. Multiple numbered courses must be properly approved, documented, and monitored for quality and maintenance of standards. Two types of multiple numbered courses are acceptable. Undergraduate studio and ensemble courses may be multiple numbered (100, 200, 300, 400), and senior and entry level graduate courses may be dual numbered (400/500/600).

**Uniform Numbering Conventions**

The following course numbers are used University-wide. Curriculum approval is not required to offer the following types of courses.

X69 **Internship** – course designed to provide practical participation under professional supervision in selected situations to gain experience in the application of concepts, principles and theories related to the student’s area of specialization. 1-12 credits.

X89 **Learning Assistant Program Seminar** – course designed for students who are either currently serving as a Learning Assistant (LA) or are planning on applying to become a LA in the future. Seminar topics support and facilitate active learning by the students in their assignments. 1 credit.

X90 **Topics** – (Special Topics: [name determined by department]; may be repeated when the topic changes.) Topics courses, under the same title, may be offered for a maximum of three semesters before formal approval is required, at which time the course must be reported through the University curriculum approval process. 1-5 credits.

X92 **Capstone/Senior Seminar** – serves as the culminating course for academic study in a student’s major. 1-5 credits.

X94 **Undergraduate Research** – Individual exploration of topical area through research, reading or field placement. 1-5 credits.

X95 **Portfolio** – culmination portfolio for research project at the graduate level. 1-6 credits.

X96 **Project/Action Research** – a non-thesis capstone research program at the graduate level (Plan B). 1-6 credits.

X97 **Independent Study** – selected research for individual students under faculty supervision. 1-6 credits.

X98 **Continuing Registration** – used at the graduate level for registration after completion of all course requirements, including thesis or capstone project; required during the semester of the oral defense examination. Enrollment may not be used to fulfill degree credit requirements or financial aid minimum requirements. 1-6 credits.

X99 **Continuing Studies** – Courses numbered X99 are reserved for institution-wide assignment for Continuing Studies and Workshops. In most instances 499 is recommended for undergraduate level and 599 for graduate level. 600 and 700 levels will not be used. These courses have a different tuition rate and are generally not used to complete degree requirements without special permission. 1-6 credits.

X99 **Thesis** – used at the graduate level for research and writing of the master’s or doctoral thesis under the supervision of the faculty chair and the thesis committee. Used only at the 600 and 700 level. 1-6 credits.

**Rationale**

A course level/uniform course policy is necessary to ensure all programs of study of offering courses with the same breadth and scope of knowledge at the appropriate level. Uniform course numbers ensure all courses with similar learning outcomes are offered in accordance with university standards.