

C-ID: Common Course Numbering

Executive Summary

- The Course Identification Numbering System (C-ID) addresses the legislated mandate for a common course numbering system among California's public colleges and universities.
- Imposing a common course numbering system that would replace existing course numbers would be costly and confusing for students.
- C-ID consists of descriptors and associated identifiers for specific lower-division, transferable courses. These identifiers can be used in conjunction with existing numbering systems at colleges and universities to facilitate the identification of comparable courses.

Background

For many years, legislators have wanted to improve the transfer path among the segments of higher education and have believed that students would transfer and complete degree requirements more quickly if California's public colleges and universities all adopted "common course numbering." C-ID is intended to address this concern in a non-invasive yet quality-controlled way.

The University of California (UC) includes 10 campuses, the California State University (CSU) 23 campuses, and the California Community Colleges 112 separate colleges. Course articulation, the process of a receiving institution determining what courses from a sending institution are comparable to its own course offerings, is crucial to a student's ability to transfer between colleges and is based on the alignment of numbered courses as they currently exist in California's 145 public institutions of higher education. Course numbers also appear in schedules and course catalogs, and California's higher education course offerings are subject to evaluation and articulation by colleges, universities, and professional programs throughout the United States. Discarding the existing course numbering systems could create chaos for students seeking to transfer from one campus to another and would be expensive (as the California Postsecondary Education Commission [CPEC] noted in 1985), not only in terms of faculty and staff time but also in terms of the resources that would be necessary to change schedules, reprint catalogs, and alter countless other information and advising documents developed by California's colleges and universities. Furthermore, the imposition of such a numbering system would likely increase complexity as courses that were deemed comparable using a traditional articulation system might not be integrated appropriately into a common numbering system; courses deemed "comparable" may not be courses that are truly identical and appropriately assigned a statewide common number.

Nevertheless, the Legislature and other bodies have repeatedly asked higher education faculty to increase the consistency of course numbering and transfer requirements. The most successful previous effort in this area was the California Articulation Number (CAN) system: CAN began as a volunteer project in 1982 and was expanded in 1985 when the state Legislature directed CPEC to develop a plan consistent with CAN's initial goals. CAN created a statewide articulation matrix: for example, if English composition was listed as English 1, 1A, 51, or 101 on different campuses, the *addition* of a CAN

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designation meant that students could readily identify courses that had been established as comparable through the CAN system.

Current Status

The current effort to establish consistency in course numbering and standards is C-ID. Like CAN, C-ID provides an identifier that signals that courses match a common description and, in the case of C-ID, a robust descriptor. A descriptor includes a description, course objectives, content, methods of evaluation, and other elements necessary for faculty to make articulation determinations. Any community college course which has been granted a particular C-ID identifier is treated as equivalent to any other course with that identifier. In addition, the C-ID descriptor system offers a means of simultaneously articulating with all 112 community colleges; a transfer institution that opts to articulate a descriptor effectively establishes articulation with all community colleges with courses that have been deemed comparable to that descriptor.

During 2010-2011, C-ID's work expanded greatly as efforts began to focus on the development of descriptors for all those courses that are a component of the statewide response (i.e., Transfer Model Curriculum) to implement Senate Bill 1440 (Padilla, 2010). The anticipated outcome of the SB 1440 implementation is increased course reciprocity and degree portability within the California Community Colleges.

In addition, the Articulation System Stimulating Interinstitutional Student Transfer (ASSIST) database helps to achieve some of the objectives that might be achieved through a common numbering system. While ASSIST does not provide common course numbering, it does provide course articulation and major information for University of California, California State University, and California Community College campuses. ASSIST is the official repository of articulation for California's public colleges and universities and allows both students and faculty to determine which courses at a given institution are equivalent to those at another.

The important goal recognized by the Legislature and addressed by C-ID is that students should be able to easily identify (1) what courses they need to take to complete a degree, *wherever they intend to transfer* and (2) what courses at their *existing college* (most commonly a California community college) can be used to meet their long term educational goals.

Goals and Recommendations

Fund ASSIST and C-ID – Funding these initiatives is critical to successful student transfer.

Visit ICAS – The Academic Senates of the three segments of higher education have the ability to solve real transfer problems. If legislators have concerns about transfer, ICAS would welcome them to meet with ICAS to establish dialogue as to how we can most effectively work together to solve these problems.

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The Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates (ICAS) was established by faculty in 1980 as a voluntary organization consisting of representatives of the Academic Senates of the three segments of public higher education in California. For more information, see: <http://icas-ca.org/>