



**LAMAR UNIVERSITY
MANUAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

SECTION: Academic Affairs

MAPP 02.04.07

AREA: Academic Courses, Programs, and Curriculum

Special Topics Courses

I. POLICY

- A. Special Topics courses are credit-bearing courses that provide academic departments the flexibility to offer courses on an "as needed" basis on subject matter not covered in the department's existing courses.

II. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- A. This policy provides guidance and expectations for the use of Special Topics courses at Lamar University (LU).
- B. This policy falls under the authority of all applicable federal, state, and Texas State University System (TSUS) statutes, rules, and regulations, including, but not limited to, the TSUS *Rules & Regulations*; Texas Education Code, Title 3, Higher Education; and Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Education.

III. USES AND LIMITATIONS OF SPECIAL TOPICS COURSES

- A. Special Topics courses should not be confused with Variable Topics courses:
 - 1. Special Topics courses are temporary courses offered on an "as needed" basis to satisfy department need, offer students additional opportunities for learning beyond a department's regular curriculum, and/or to leverage faculty expertise in subjects not covered in the regular curriculum.
 - 2. Variable Topics courses are a permanent part of a department's regular curriculum. The course number and title remain the same across iterations of the course, and the course may be offered on a recurring basis. However, the subject matter is typically different across iterations of the course.
- B. Special Topics courses should not cover subject matter that is offered, or could be offered, through a department's existing courses.
- C. Departments typically have specific course numbers set aside to identify Special Topics courses. Although the course number may not change, the subject matter of these courses varies. Students

may repeat a Special Topics course for additional credit provided the content is different for each course taken. (Note. Students who wish to repeat a Special Topics course should first contact their department or the Registrar to determine if a limit has been set on the number of times a student can repeat a Special Topics course and count it for credit towards their degree.)

- D. Special Topics courses are considered electives and typically should not be used as substitutions for courses specifically identified in a student's degree plan. In exceptional circumstances, a Special Topics course may be substituted for a course in a student's degree plan. Students should check with their department and the Registrar to ensure that a Special Topics course can be substituted for a degree requirement due to exceptional circumstances.
- E. Special Topics courses should not be used to offer the same content over multiple terms. The same subject matter may be offered no more than three (3) times under a Special Topics course number. To offer the same subject matter on a recurring basis, a department may submit a new course proposal to the Undergraduate Curriculum Council or Graduate Council for review. When approved, the new course becomes a permanent part of a department's regular curriculum and may be offered on a recurring basis.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. When a department recognizes a need for a Special Topics course, a faculty member with expertise in that area of study will submit a Special Topics course proposal. A link is provided on the LU Curriculum page that routes users to the appropriate form, and the following process will be followed:
 - 1. The faculty member with expertise in that area of study will:
 - Initiate the request;
 - Upload a justification explaining the need for the Special Topics course;
 - Upload the syllabus including all elements required by the University, state, and accrediting agencies, such as student learning outcomes and required readings.
 - 2. The request will then route through the following approval steps:
 - Department Chair
 - Dean
 - Senior Associate Provost
 - 3. Upon approval by the Senior Associate Provost:
 - The Curriculum Office will be notified.
 - The Registrar's Office will be notified of the approval to build the course.

V. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITY

Responsible Party: Academic Policy Advisory Council

Review Schedule: Every three years on or before the date the policy was last revised and/or approved.

VI. APPROVAL

Dr. Brett Welch	05/05/2025
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs	Date

Dr. Jaime Taylor	05/06/2025
Lamar University President	Date

POLICY LOG

Version	Date	Description of Changes
1	01/29/2025	Policy draft completed.
	01/29/2025 - 03/14/2025	Reviews by constituency groups completed.
	03/24/2025 - 04/24/2025	Review by campus community completed.
	05/02/2025	Section IV (Procedures) updated to align with newly established system for proposing, routing, and approving Special Topics Courses.
	05/06/2025	Policy approved by President.