

A Proposal to Establish a Designation for Professional Development Credit Courses

Current Method of Offering In-service Courses for Educators

Educators (and other professions) are required to have ongoing continuing education to maintain professional licenses and, in the case of educators, advance on a salary scale. The current method uses rubrics and numbers that appear to be graduate-level courses but are not intended to count in a graduate program and are typically graded as pass/fail only. The approval process for these courses (when offered for educators) calls for a review of the course by the Director of the Montana Center for Inclusive Education, Educational Theory and Practice Department Chair, Provost and Director of Extended Campus (please see attached cover sheet). All instructors are vetted through the academic department and dean's office.

Problems/Issues with the Current Approach

- Currently courses intended for continuing education for educators appear to be courses that count toward a Master's degree. This is not the case but has caused confusion over a number of years.
- BOR policy defines an "extension" credit offered through extended education units as the same as "resident" credits (that count toward degrees). However the course as currently developed and reviewed are not intended to count toward degrees.

A New Method to Offer Professional Development Courses

Extended Campus, in collaboration with the College of Education is interested in designating a specific post-bach number for professional development courses. This type of credit, while transcribed, would not count toward degree requirements. It would serve the needs of educators and other professions that have continuing education requirements. The Registrar's Office has identified the number of PD along with 592 as a solution. This does not represent a new rubric, rather it is the numbering that would follow the departmental prefix. For example a course offered through the college of education would appear as EDCI PD592: Incorporating the iPad into Teaching. Similarly, a course offered by the Math would appear as MATH PD592: Using a Graphing Calculator to Enhance Student Performance. The numbering of XXX PD592 would be used for every professional development course offered by the same department, however the name of the course would change.

Advantages to Designating Courses Intended for Continuing Education with New PD Label

- Courses identified as PD592 would be clearly identified on websites, promotional information and registration forms with the following message: "Professional development only. Does not count toward degrees." Further, on a transcript a course

with the PD label would be easily distinguishable from other 500-level courses that do count toward degree requirements.

- Establishing a new professional development designated credit would allow the university to define it differently than an “extension” credit that, by BOR policy, is the same as “resident” credits that count toward degrees.
- BOR policy also states that extension courses offered through extended education units cannot undercut the price of a state-support “resident” credit. By establishing a new type of credit, Extended Campus can price the professional development credit at a lower rate making it more accessible to educators and giving EC a competitive price advantage.

Please note that professional development credit does not replace continuing education units (C.E.U.s) but allows an option for individuals that belong to professions that require transcribed credit at a post-bach but not necessarily graduate level.