



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY
589 MCNAIR ROAD
ANNAPOLIS MARYLAND 21402-1300

PROVOSTINST 1531.50D
VPAA
7 Aug 2026

PROVOST INSTRUCTION 1531.50D

From: Provost, U.S. Naval Academy

Subj: EXPERIMENTAL AND TOPICS COURSES

Ref: (a) PROVOSTINST 5420.20H CH-1

1. Purpose

a. To define the purpose of experimental and topics courses and establish procedures for seeking approval to offer them.

b. This revision updates the subject to better reflect the content of the instruction. A new section has been added to clarify the differences between experimental and topics courses and establish the procedure for a Provost-level review of topics course proposals.

2. Cancellation. PROVOSTINST 1531.50C CH-1.

3. Scope and Applicability. This instruction applies to all faculty, academic departments, and administrative personnel involved in proposing, reviewing, or offering experimental and topics courses.

4. Experimental Courses

a. Experimental courses are designated by the following series of numbers: 180-188, 280-288, 380-388, and 480-488. The 18X designation generally is used for courses that have no prerequisites. Courses with a 28X designation may or may not have prerequisites while 38X and 48X designations are generally used for courses that have one or more prerequisites.

b. Experimental courses are temporary by nature. They provide departments with a pathway to pilot a new course for up to two semesters before proposing a permanent addition to the curriculum. Departments also may offer these courses to take advantage of the special expertise of a temporary faculty member.

c. Credits will be associated with courses in the 18X, 28X, 38X, or 48X series according to the following:

(1) XX_80: 0 credits

- (2) XX_81 and XX_82: 1 credit
- (3) XX_83 and XX_84: 2 credits
- (4) XX_85 and XX_86: 3 credits
- (5) XX_87 and XX_88: 4 credits

d. Department chairs who desire to offer experimental courses will request approval from the Provost via submission of a Curriculum Change Request (CCR) per reference (a). The CCR will be routed via the school dean or division director, the school Curriculum Committee Chair, and the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee (FSCC) Chair.

e. Per reference (a), the introduction of an experimental course is an example of a routine curriculum change that warrants a short review rather than a review by the full FSCC. Since elective humanities-social science courses are part of the core requirement for graduation, 28X, 38X, or 48X courses for which humanities-social science credit is to be given must also receive a positive endorsement from the Curriculum Committee of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

f. The deadline to submit a CCR for an experimental course generally falls at the end of week four of the semester prior to the one in which the course is to be offered.

g. Department schedulers will not include experimental courses in their course offerings without authorization from the Provost. The Registrar will remove any experimental course offerings that have not received Provost approval.

h. Since experimental courses are temporary rather than permanent, such courses will not appear in the Naval Academy catalog. When presenting information about experimental courses to their students, departments should clearly indicate that these courses are temporary and not a permanent part of the curriculum. Departments may allow experimental courses to satisfy elective requirements within their majors.

i. Approval for experimental courses will not extend beyond two offerings without an appropriate curriculum change request for permanent status per reference (a). When such a curriculum change is in process, a third and final offering of the experimental course may be authorized.

5. Topics Courses

a. Topics courses are permanent courses in which the content is limited to specific fields or subject areas within a major or discipline. It is expected that the content of these courses will change from semester to semester to address current developments or special

interests within the defined subject area. With the exception of courses taught by non-permanent faculty including distinguished visiting professors, topics courses will not be used to routinely offer the same content on a recurring basis, and they typically cannot be used as an experimental course with the goal of establishing it as a regular course. Departments with elective-driven majors may request a topics course be considered experimental for the purpose of potentially establishing it as a regular, permanent course. To make such a request, a department must follow the policies for experimental courses outlined above but may use the topics course numbering instead of numbering associated with experimental courses.

b. Each version of a topics course must be reviewed and approved prior to the semester in which the course is to be offered. The initial review is conducted by the department chair who then forwards a recommendation to the school dean or division director. The school deans or division directors will then consolidate all proposed topics courses from their respective departments and route a memo to the Provost via the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (VPAA) with a copy to the FSCC Chair. For each topics course, the memo should provide the following information:

- (1) course designator
- (2) proposed course title
- (3) contact hours and credits
- (4) instructor name
- (5) a brief course description
- (6) whether the course is to be offered for humanities-social science credit
- (7) whether the course is recommended for approval by the department chair
- (8) whether the course is recommended for approval by the school dean or division director

c. The deadline to submit the memo generally falls at the end of week four of the semester prior to the one in which the course is to be offered. This timing aligns with the deadline for submitting experimental course CCRs as described above.

d. Department schedulers will not include topics courses in their course offerings without authorization from the Provost. The Registrar will remove any topics course offerings that have not received Provost approval.

6. Records Management

a. Records created as a result of this instruction, regardless of format or media, must be maintained and dispositioned per the records disposition schedules located on the DON Assistant for Administration, Directives and Records Management Division portal page at <https://www.secnav.navy.mil/doni/Records%20Management%20Schedules/Forms/AllItems.aspx>.

b. For questions concerning the management of records related to this instruction or the records disposition schedules, please contact your local records custodian or the USNA Records Manager.

7. Review and Effective Date. Per OPNAVINST 5215.71A, VPAA will review this instruction annually on the anniversary of the issuance date to ensure applicability, currency, and consistency with Federal, Department of Defense, Secretary of the Navy, and Navy policy and statutory authority using OPNAV 5215/40 Review of Instruction. This instruction will be in effect for 10 years, unless revised or canceled in the interim, and will be reissued by the 10-year anniversary date if it is still required, unless it meets one of the exceptions in OPNAVINST 5214.17A, paragraph 9. Otherwise, if the instruction is no longer required, it will be processed for cancellation as soon as the need for cancellation is known following the guidance in OPNAV Manual 5215.1 of May 2016.

S. L. FIREBAUGH

Releasability and distribution:

This instruction is cleared for public release and is available electronically via the Provost Instructions internet website: <https://www.usna.edu/Academics/Provost/Rules-Regulations/Instructions.php>