

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

**OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC**

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Senate

**From:** D. Gagan, Chair   
Senate Committee on Academic Planning

**Subject:** Special Topics Courses  
(SCAP Ref.: SCAP 96-10)

**Date:** February 12, 1996

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Action undertaken by the Senate Graduate Studies Committee and the Senate Committee on Academic Planning gives rise to the following motion:

**Motion:**

"That Senate approve and recommend approval to the Board of Governors, as set forth in S.96 - 17 , that in accordance with the procedures approved for temporary undergraduate courses (Paper S.96-5 attached), similar action be taken for approving temporary Special Topics, Directed Readings and Directed Studies courses at the graduate level."

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Alison Watt, Secretary  
Senate Committee on Academic  
Planning

From: B.P. Clayman  
Vice-President Research/  
Dean of Graduate Studies

Subject: Special Topics Courses

Date: February 1, 1996

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The proposal with respect to Special Topics, Directed Readings and Directed Studies courses as described in the attached memorandum has been approved by the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, at its Meeting on January 29, 1996, and is now being forwarded to the Senate Committee on Academic Planning for approval.



B.P. Clayman  
Vice President Research/  
Dean of Graduate Studies

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attach.

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**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**  
OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
Memorandum

GS. 96.3

**TO:** Senate Graduate Studies Committee

**FROM:** Bruce P. Clayman  
Dean of Graduate Studies

**SUBJECT:** Special Topics Courses

**DATE:** January 11, 1996

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I propose that we introduce, at the graduate level, the same option with respect to Special Topics, Directed Reading and Directed Studies courses as described in the attached memorandum from Ron Heath to SCUS. The rationale for the change is presented in that memo. The proposal was approved by Senate earlier this week.

At the graduate level the Chair of the relevant Faculty Graduate Studies Committee would report annually to SGSC regarding the occasions where temporary Special Topics, Directed Readings and Directed Studies courses had been exercised.

If approved, this option would allow departments to drop from the calendar the long lists of course titles and numbers that have been put in place to handle multiple offerings of such courses.

This will be considered at the next meeting of the Senate Graduate Studies Committee.

enclosure

c. M. McGinn (for distribution with the SGSC agenda)

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**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**  
**OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC**  
**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Senate

**From:** D. Gagan, Chair   
Senate Committee on Academic Planning

**Subject:** Special Topics Courses  
(SCUS Reference: SCUS 95 - 22  
SCAP Reference: SCAP 95 - 69)

**Date:** December 11, 1995

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Action undertaken by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies and the Senate Committee on Academic Planning gives rise to the following motion:

**Motion:**

“that Senate approve and recommend approval to the Board of Governors, as set forth in s.96-5 , procedures to be followed in the creation of temporary Special Topics courses.”



Simon Fraser University

Office of the Registrar

## Memorandum

To: SCUS

From: Ron Heath  
Registrar/Secretary of Senate

Subject: Special Topics Courses

Date: November 27, 1995

Under current process, a department must have in place a "Special Topics" course offering with a designated course number if a special course offering is to be made available in a given semester. Some departments have attempted to cover every eventuality by setting up a series of special topics courses/numbers at each course level (i.e. 100 level, 200 level, etc.), with the result that they have a relatively large number of calendar entries with few occasions when the various numbers are actually used. The ability to assign a different course number to each special topic allows the student's individual record to accurately reflect the title of the subject in the course. On some occasions, the available numbers at a particular course level may not be sufficient. If a department does not have any available predetermined special topics number at the required level, they may be faced with a decision to either not make the course available or to offer it at a level that is less desirable simply to conform to an available number. Another option is to offer a variety of Special Topics under a single course number but in these cases, the actual subject of the course cannot be designated and everyone in the course, regardless of the subject, has a transcript entry of Special Topic. This makes it very difficult to monitor duplications in individual cases and does not explicitly record for the student the nature of the academic work actually completed.

Based on the discussions we have already had in SCUS, I would like to suggest an alternative arrangement which would put in place sufficient control to prevent misuse of the feature, while at the same time it would provide departments with flexibility to take advantage of special circumstances and offer innovative courses when possible.

#### Special Topics Courses

The current calendar entries for Special Topics courses would remain and in fact, a department could request additional designations in the usual manner to have them recorded in the Calendar. However, should a department wish to offer a 'special topics' course in a semester without an existing course designation under which the topic can be offered, the department may initiate a request for a temporary special topics number. The request would proceed to the office of the Faculty Dean and would include the rationale, the manner in which the course relates to the departmental curriculum and the probable audience (level, number of registrants, fields of study, etc.). If approved by the Dean (or his/her designate), the approval will be communicated to the department and the Registrar for assignment of a temporary special topics course number. Temporary special topics numbers assigned in this manner normally will expire after a maximum of three semesters. This would provide the department with sufficient opportunity to assess the course in the context of its regular offerings and, if appropriate, to initiate necessary procedures to formalize it as a regular course offering. The Chair of each Faculty Curriculum Committee will report yearly to SCUS, in the fall semester, regarding the occasions where temporary 'special topics' designations have been exercised.