

Guidelines on Course Levels

Faculty of Science, McGill University

December 9, 2009

1 Introduction

During recent discussions in the Faculty of Science Academic Committee it was suggested that it would be useful to have some guidelines about course numbers and levels. This document outlines the guidelines. It is requested that units review their course offerings to determine if their courses follow these guidelines. Further, when revising a course or proposing a new course, these guidelines should be used.

These guidelines do not apply to courses that are offered primarily as part of a program offered by another Faculty. For example, BIOL 115 (Essential Biology), which is open only to non-Science students. Similar courses include, BIOL 210 (Perspectives of Science) which is intended for Arts students doing a Minor Concentration in Science, MATH 111 (Mathematics for Education Students), MATH 112 (Fundamentals in Mathematics), MATH 122 (Calculus for Management), MATH 123 (Linear Algebra and Probability) for Management students only, EPSC 221 (General Geology) for Engineering students, EPSC 225 (Properties of Minerals) for Engineering students, PHYS 224 (Physic and Psychophysics of Music) and PHYS 225 (Musical Acoustics) designed for Music students.

2 100-level courses

All 100-level courses should fit into one of the following categories:

General Interest Courses (18x):

- Courses numbered 18x are considered to be *General Interest Courses*.
- These courses generally have no prerequisites and are usually open to a wide variety of students (not just U0 students) both within and outside the Faculty of Science.
- General Interest Courses cannot be part of a major program.¹
- A General Interest Course cannot be an official Freshman Science course.

First-Year Interest Groups (FIGS 196):

The course number 196 is used for the First-Year Interest Groups (FIGS) course which is a 0-credit activity which is restricted to first year B.Sc. and BA&Sc students.

¹By *major program* we mean a Core Science Component (CSC), Major Concentration, Major or Honours program.

First-Year Seminar Courses (199):

First-Year Seminar Courses are small, limited-enrolment courses, which are restricted to first-year students and may only be used as electives. On occasion, if a department offers two FYS courses, the number 198 may also be used.

Official Freshman Science Courses:

Freshman Science courses are those that can be used to satisfy the requirements of the B.Sc. freshman program. Currently this includes BIOL 111, BIOL 112, CHEM 110, CHEM 115, CHEM 120, ESYS 104, MATH 133, MATH 139, MATH 140, MATH 141, MATH 150, MATH 151, PHYS 101, PHYS 102, PHYS 131, PHYS 142 and PSYC 100.²

3 Main program courses

All 200, 300, 400 and 500-level courses should be an important part of some major program. The exceptions to this rule are the 396 courses, which are elective research courses.

All such courses should have some required prerequisites and/or act as prerequisites for subsequent courses. Prerequisites are usually specified as one or more specific courses, but prerequisites may also be specified using a more general measure of adequate preparation (for example, requiring the completion a certain number of upper-level program credits).

Orphan Courses are those which have no prereqs and no courses for which they are prereqs. Orphan Courses should not exist without a specific rationale and they should be an integral part of some major program.

200-level courses:

- 200-level courses are intended to be taken in the U1 year;
- they often have U0 (or CEGEP equivalents) prerequisites; and
- are often prereqs for other 200-level or upper-year courses.

300-level courses:

- 300-level courses can be taken in U2 or U3, required 300-level courses are intended to be taken in the U2 year;
- they usually have 200-level or 300-level prereqs;
- they are often prereqs for upper-year courses; and
- courses numbered 396 (plus MIMM 397) are special elective research courses.

400 and 500-level courses:

- 400-level courses are intended to be taken in the U3 year;
- they usually have prereqs to ensure adequate preparation (i.e. one or more 300-level courses or some requirement for overall preparation such as a certain number program credits completed);
- are often more specialized courses or courses that provide a capstone experience; and

²Note that COMP 202 is serves a dual-purpose as both a freshman science course and as a program course for students who have no programming experience.

- 500-level courses are similar to 400-level courses except they may also be taken by graduate students and so must be at a level appropriate for both senior undergraduates and beginning graduate students.