



TO: Articulation Coordinating Committee, Florida Department of Education

FROM: Dr. Wayne Bowen, Director, Interdisciplinary Studies

DATE: May 15, 2020

SUBJECT: Appeal of Prefix Assignments – B.S., Environmental Studies

I would like to appeal the denial of UCF's request for the assignment of the EVR prefix to an existing course (Foundations of Environmental Studies, currently IDS 3150) and a new course (Research Methods in Environmental Studies, assigned ISC 3523 by FLDOE). This appeal is based on seven justifications:

1. FLDOE Precedent: The Florida Department of Education assigned EVR 4940 as the prefix and number for UCF's "Capstone Environmental Studies" course, previously IDS 4893. That decision is appropriate and germane to this request. The justification for this change, as part of a revision of the Environmental Studies curriculum at UCF, was the same for the other two course requests: assigning EVR to the new Research Methods course and changing IDS 3150 "Foundations of Environmental Studies" to EVR 3150 "Foundations of Environmental Studies."
2. Content Mismatch with Existing SUS ISC 3523 Courses: The lack of similarity between the proposed EVR 3450 and other institutional courses listed as ISC 3523 makes the selection of this prefix and number concerning.
  - a. At FSU, ISC 3523 is "Research Methods for Prospective Science Teachers," a course focused on students in the teacher education program and preparing future educators for K-12 schools.
  - b. At UF and FIU, ISC 3523 is a general science course, introducing students to the scientific method, laboratory procedures, and the basics of science and the work of scientists.
  - c. At EFSC, ISC 3523 is a general science course, but with special focus on "science and healthcare."UCF's course and its learning outcomes do not follow the examples of any of these classes. The UCF class is clearly and specifically a course focused on Research Methods in Environmental Studies, not teacher education or general scientific methods. A careful reading of the course descriptions for ISC 3523 as currently offered elsewhere show little correlation with UCF's proposed course.

Additionally, the UCF research course is not just based on the life science components of environmental studies, but also involves social sciences and the humanities for components related to planning, communication, policy, and values.

3. Transfer Mismatch with Existing Courses: Related to the examples provided in paragraph 2, keeping this course as ISC 3523 will be inconsistent with ensuring appropriate transferability between SUS institutions. The UCF course has as a prerequisite the course “Foundations of Environmental Studies,” which is not the case at the other institutions. UF requires one year of biology, chemistry, or physics; FSU has no prerequisite; FIU requires SMT 2661 and SMT 2662, both course in Science and Mathematics Education. A student transferring into ISC 3523 from any of these institutions to UCF, or vice versa, would potentially be unprepared for this course, and would also be off-track for the Environmental Studies degree if coming to UCF. Given that courses with the same prefix and number are guaranteed to transfer, keeping the proposed UCF course identical to the other highly dissimilar offerings could be misleading to students.
4. FAMU Example: The prevalence of the EVR prefix at FAMU, the SUS institution with the most comparable program and degree offerings, was a key data point for UCF in the program revision. FAMU has twenty-six Environmental Studies courses listed in their catalog that use the EVR prefix. Indeed, the UCF program looked to FAMU for insight into curricular structure, and cited the use the of EVR prefix in the course proposal and curriculum revisions approved at the university-level during the last academic year. FAMU’s role as a statewide leader in Environmental Studies encouraged us to hope to partner increasingly with that university, as we did in 2018 through participating in the EnergyWaterFoodNexus International Summit organized by FAMU. It makes sense to follow the example of FAMU at UCF and other SUS institutions, as one way to enhance curricular alignment.
5. Post-pilot Course Changes: UCF made significant changes to the approach of the course, proposed as EVR 3450, based on its initial piloting during summer 2019. While the initial course proposal submitted to FLDOE did include language referring to interdisciplinarity, the revised syllabus, which we have sent to FLDOE, is more narrowly focused on environmental studies and highly correlated fields. Consistent with these changes, we respectfully also propose a title change to “Research Methods in Environmental Studies,” rather than the initial title that included the word “Interdisciplinary.” While Environmental Studies at UCF began as a track within Interdisciplinary Studies, it is now a free-standing B.S. in Environmental Studies, with over 300 majors as of Spring 2020.



6. Timeliness and Process. It took more than a year to receive the denial of our request to change the prefix from IDS 3150 to EVR, a decision that came from FLDOE on April 8, 2020 with no explanation or justification. In addition, it took more than year to hear that there was a formal appeal process, after multiple requests from this program for an explanation of these denials.
  
7. External Recommendations of Academic Program Review. UCF's Environmental Studies degree completed an Academic Program Review process in the 2019-2020 academic year, which included reports from external reviewers. One of their conclusions was that the major lacked a consistent differentiation from the existing Interdisciplinary Studies program within which it was housed and in which it had originated as a track within the IDS major. This supports the original justification for this request to change Environmental Studies courses from the IDS prefix to the EVR prefix. The reviewers noted that the change from a single IDS prefix to three distinct prefixes (IDS, ISC, and EVR) in required Environmental Studies courses had the potential to cause even more confusion among students, increase challenges in promoting the degree, and promote a sense of identity and community among current students, faculty, and alumni.

Thank you for considering this request. We appreciate the ACC reviewing this appeal and hope for a favorable response.