

1. For 6 course modifications that involve only a change in “Method of Grading”, I am being asked to re-submit course outlines using the new format. It is not appropriate to require faculty to perform data-entry of already existing documentation.

For many types of course modifications, submitting a course modification form (Form B) used to be sufficient. However, now everyone must submit a new course outline (Form A), regardless of how minor the modification is and whether there are any changes or not to the course outline. A current electronic version of Form A is not acceptable though.

The Office of Instruction made minor modifications to the format of the Excel file in which Course Outlines must be submitted, so changes cannot be made to the existing files. Instead, all information must be entered in the “new form”, i.e., re-typed, or copy/pasted. However, the copy/paste process is not only tedious and time-consuming. In fact, it is not a straightforward process of copying and pasting: since cell formats are different in the new and old format, often it is impossible to copy text over without first re-formatting the cells so that the original and the receiving cell are identical in size.

When computer applications are used, manufacturer upgrades or changes in design to a new version or system are always transparent to the users. For example, when Microsoft comes up with a newer version of Word, the documents written in the prior version are still good, and if necessary, automatically converted to the new version. How often have you simply downloaded upgraded software from the Internet, without ever having to modify the existing files yourself? Likewise, when a company redesigns its computerized applications, the data conversion is part of this process, that is, all data is transferred to the new system, without impacting the work load or accessibility of the users. This has been the standard practice since computers entered the workplace (and our lives!).

2. Course outlines (and related documentation) are to be submitted using an Excel template. A spreadsheet application is not the appropriate tool for a text-based file.

Spreadsheets are useful computer applications to be used for “number crunching” processes. Spreadsheets are a good tool to use when data is mostly numeric, and when manipulations to the data are based on numbers (such as calculations, comparisons). Course outlines and related documents contain mostly text (i.e., words). The numbers they contain are not used as “numbers”, but as “text” (if a course has the number 100, that number is like a “name” for the course, the “100” is not used to do any math with it). I was unable to find a single formula in the entire spreadsheet. Thus, the use of such tool is unwarranted. A word-processing application is the type of software that is used for a text file. Word processors normally have “template” capabilities, that is, a standardized form can be designed so that whoever fills it out will comply with the necessary formatting.