Header-Body Checks

# Overview

There are two limits that can be specified in the header part of a Scribe Block: MaxCredits and MaxClasses. These limits tell how many classes and/or credits can be applied to satisfying the requirements given in the body (rules) part of this block. In addition to the number of credits and/or number of classes, each limit gives a list of courses to which the limit applies. These course lists may include wildcards (@) for the subject and catalog numbers of the courses, and the catalog number can be given as a range (using a colon). Furthermore, there can be a list of courses that are exempt from the limit. Finally, each course can be subject to a “with-restriction” that specifies properties that govern the applicability of the limit.

## Examples

## MaxClasses 3 in PHYS 1@

## MaxCredits 4.5 in @ (With DWTransfer = 'Y') except PSY 200:299

No more than three 100-level Physics courses[[1]](#footnote-1) may be used to satisfy the requirements in this block.

No more than 4.5 credits in any course having the *DWTransfer* property with the value 'Y' may count towards the block’s requirements, but this limit does not apply to Psychology courses at the 200-level.

# The Question

How important is it to show these limits when displaying the block’s requirements?

There are at least two cases where they can safely be ignored:

1. The courses listed are mutually exclusive anyway. There are three sub-cases:
   1. Two courses may be “cross-listed.” In PeopleSoft, a single course can be offered with different subjects and/or catalog numbers (same course-id but different offer-numbers). Students can’t get credit for taking the two different versions.
   2. Courses may be part of an equivalence group. Here, students can’t get credit for taking more than one course within the group.
   3. Inactive courses can be replaced by equivalent new courses. Students who took the now-inactive version are not allowed to register for the new version.[[2]](#footnote-2)
2. The limits specified in the header may be redundant to restrictions present in the body.

# Methodology

The parse tree for each Scribe Block is saved in JSON format as two lists of dictionaries, one for the header and one for the body. The *course\_mapper* application traverses these two lists to generate three tables: one (“programs”) that summarizes the block’s metadata and header information; one (“requirements”) that identifies requirements from the body that have associated sets of courses; and one (“mappings”) that maps {course-id, offer-number} tuples to rows in the requirements table.

The *programs* table includes columns for earned-grade and transfer limits that apply to all the requirements specified in the body of the block. At the present time, it has been augmented with an “Other” column that contains lists of any *MaxCredits* and *MaxClasses* limits for the program block.

The *header\_body\_check* application determines what intersections exist between course sets in header MaxCredits/MaxClasses entries (“limit sets”) and course sets found in the requirements for the block (“requirement sets”). That is, it looks for cases where the limits in the header are potentially redundant to the requirements specified in the body of a block. This redundancy is “potential” because with-clauses are ignored in constructing both sets. These course sets are built by finding all active courses that match *scribed* and *except* course lists for the limit and requirement, respectively. For two members of two sets to match they must have the same subject and catalog number. Whereas the *course\_mapper* application ignores course lists that expand to all active courses at a college, the *header\_body\_check* application does include all active courses when building the limit and requirement course sets.

*header\_body\_check* lists, for all MaxCredits and MaxClasses lists found in a Scribe Block, one of four types of information:

1. If all the active courses listed for the limit are cross-listed
2. If all the active courses listed for the limit are part of a single equivalence group
3. If there are no active courses for the limit
4. An analysis of how the list of courses specified in the limit overlaps with list of courses in the various requirements specified in the body of the block.

A script generates a spreadsheet from the report generated by *header\_body\_check.* The script counts how many times various patterns of limit/requirement overlaps occur. These are the columns in the summary spreadsheet:

* Count: How often this pattern was found
* Program: Type of Scribe Block (Major, Minor, Concentration, Other)
* Limit: The numerical limit specified in the header
* Type: Whether the limit is the number of classes or the number of credits
* Courses: How many active courses are in the header limit set
* Overlap: How many courses in a requirement’s course set overlap with the courses in the header limit set
* Alternatives: How many active courses are in the requirement’s course set

# Results

$ ./header\_body\_check.py

385,436 DWTransfer = Y

34,650 None

11,664 DWPassfail = Y

8,606 DWResident = Y and DWGrade < 1.7

16 DWgrade < C

6 DECIDE = LOWTERM

541 blocks 00:12

1. Assuming all course numbers are three digits. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The active and inactive versions have the same course-id and offer-number, but might have different subjects, catalog-numbers, titles… [↑](#footnote-ref-2)