

A Rose by Any *Other* Name

In William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet asks from her balcony, "What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet" (2.2.46-47). But does the same apply to CIP Codes? When an institution classifies an academic program using one of the "other" codes (i.e., XX.XX99 or XX.9999), is it as good as using a specific CIP code? In most cases, the answer is an unequivocal no.

According to the [CIP 2020 Frequently Asked Questions](#), programs that are undifferentiated, non-specified, or generalized should be included in the "general" category at the beginning of a four-digit series, while programs that are specific but do not fit into any of the CIP codes should be included in the 99 "other" category at the end of a series.

When preparing CIP 2020, we noticed that some four-digit series were missing a "general" code (e.g., [43.0100 Criminal Justice and Corrections, General](#)). In most cases, a specific CIP code was already in the "01," so the new general code needed to be "00" so it would be at the top of the list. After we published CIP 2020, we noticed some additional historical artifacts. For example, the term geosciences does not appear in any codes under [40.06 Geological and Earth Sciences/Geosciences](#). We will correct this in the next edition of the CIP. We identified these two examples by analyzing what we call "write-ins."

On the IPEDS Completions survey, institutions can submit the program name for any "other" codes. These "write-ins" provide excellent feedback about emerging fields of study, problems with the CIP taxonomy, and opportunities for improving the CIP documentation and training materials. The idea is that "other" will just be a temporary home for most academic programs until we add a new specific CIP code. In extremely rare cases, where an academic program only exists at one or two institutions, and there is no evidence that it is an emerging field of study, an academic program may remain classified as "other" for a while. In these cases, that academic program will usually be listed as an illustrative example under the "other" code so that users can find it using the search feature on the CIP website.

During the latest IPEDS Completions Survey, 1,698 "write-ins" represented 27,307 completions, which is about 0.5% of the total degrees/certificates awarded (approximately 5.1 million in 2020-2021). This list of program names would be exciting if these were indeed emerging fields of study, but only about 3% of them are potentially new CIP Codes. The rest were coding errors. Almost all of them fall into one of five guidelines discussed in the CIP 2020 Frequently Asked Questions (the numbers below represent the question number in the document). In descending order of frequency, they are:

3. When is a CIP code reported under a "general" category vs. "other" category?
8. Where should degrees that are awarded in a student-designed major or an individualized major be reported?
7. Where should degrees awarded in an undeclared major or General Studies be reported?
12. How should double majors be coded?

6. Do degree levels apply to CIP codes?

In our next blog post we will dig deeper into each of these frequently asked questions and provide more clarification.

In the meantime, do you have an academic program that is coded as “other” that you feel should be in the CIP, but you just can’t seem to find it? Send an email to CIP2020@ed.gov and one of our CIP specialists will be happy to provide some suggestions. Please note that these are only suggestions, and the final choice of CIP code is ultimately up to the institution or system office.