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# THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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WASHINGTON, DC

## Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Codes

### Understanding CIP Code and its Taxonomy

The Classification of Instructional Programs ([CIP](#)) is a taxonomy or coding scheme of instructional programs. Its purpose is to facilitate and support the organization, collection and reporting of fields of study and program completions. Originally developed and published in 1980 by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), it has been revised five times, most recently in 2020. At GW it serves as the standard taxonomy on instructional programs for the federal government, and is used in GW's annual reporting of its programs and degree completions to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

The 2020 update of CIP codes added nearly 70 new four-digit series and more than 300 new six-digit codes to align with the development of new programs and majors. In 2022, the Department of Homeland Security added 22 CIP codes to the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program List. The full list of over 2,800 CIP codes and corresponding definitions can be found [here](#).

All GW majors and graduate fields are assigned a six-digit CIP code for the purpose of reporting data to the federal government. Every two digits in the code represent a piece of the taxonomy to add greater detail. For example, for CIP code **11.0103: Information Technology**

- First two digits ([11](#)) represent most general groupings of the related programs.
- First four digits ([11.01](#)) represent groupings of programs that have comparable content and objectives.
- Six digit codes ([11.0103](#)) represent the specific instructional program and provide the most detailed information, which is used when reporting programs to the IPEDS.

### Assigning, Reviewing, and Changing CIP Codes to Academic Programs

At GW, CIP codes are assigned with the following considerations:

1. **CIP codes are generally assigned at the degree program level by choosing the appropriate CIP code associated with the major code.** Each major code is assigned the CIP code that **best represents** the focus and curriculum of the program. If the curriculum fits more than one CIP classification, the CIP code that most closely matches the program's content will be selected. When determining "best fit" we compare the instructional component in the CIP Code definition with the proposed curriculum to make sure that at least 50% of the curriculum covers the topics listed in definition.

In determination of "best fit" the instructional component in the CIP Code definition is compared with the proposed curriculum to confirm that the majority of topics listed in the definition are

covered in the curriculum. We also look into the practice of similar programs of other peer institutions so that GW programs could be lined up correctly in the nation.

2. **CIP codes are assigned to majors, not individuals.** All students enrolled in or holding degrees/certificates from a given major code are identified by the same CIP code, regardless of their individual course selections, thesis, or dissertation foci.

The creation of a new program will be assigned a CIP code if it requires a new major code. CIP codes of existing programs should be reviewed periodically to ensure their accuracy and currency. Occasionally, change in CIP code may be merited if the program's curriculum has changed or if the original designation was made in error. At GW, the approval of such change is approved by Office of Academic Planning and Assessment through [CourseLeaf](#). The CourseLeaf system requires that corresponding program changes include learning outcomes, a curriculum map, list of courses, a rationale for the change, etc.

### **CIP Codes and STEM Programs**

Several government agencies and nonprofit organizations have published standards and lists of programs that they consider STEM. These lists ([ACT](#), [Carnegie Foundation](#), [NCES](#), [NSF](#)) may be used for grant funding or for other reporting purposes.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) also maintains a list of [STEM programs](#), which are widely used by institutions of higher education. International students with F-1 visas who graduate from programs on the DHS list may extend their stay working in the U.S. for an additional 24 months using the STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) [extension](#) based on the DHS's STEM programs list. DHS only considers the primary major code for STEM determination, concentration codes are not taken into account.

International students graduating from programs with majors not on the DHS list are only eligible to remain working in the U.S. for a 12 month period of regular [post-completion OPT](#).

Academic Planning and Assessment

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