



# Reporting the Cost of Required Instructional Materials

All colleges now need to report to the state chancellor's office the cost of required instructional materials for each of their sections---not the exact dollar amount of the required instructional materials, but what basic category applies.

More specifically, for each section, we need to say which of the following categories applies to that section:

A – Section has no associated instructional material

B – Section uses only no-cost digital instructional materials [e.g., OER, library databases]

C – Section has instructional material costs none of which are passed on to students [instructor provides copies of the teaching materials]

D – Section has low instructional material costs

Y – Section does not meet no-cost [category A, B, or C] or low-cost [category D] instructional material criteria

Sections that fall under categories A, B, or C count as no-cost or ZTC sections. Sections that fall under category D count as low-cost or LTC sections.

## What is meant by “instructional materials”?

**Instructional materials include:** textbooks, workbooks, lab manuals, readers, specialized websites/software, and online homework systems.

**Non-instructional materials include:** supplementary items such as lab coats, goggles, calculators, art supplies, culinary supplies, cosmetology supplies etc.. These are not considered instructional materials because they can be re-used outside of the classroom environment.

## What is meant by “low instructional material costs”?

A section counts as having low instructional material costs---it counts as an LTC (Low Textbook Cost) section---when the total cost of required instructional materials does not exceed \$50.

In terms of calculating the price of your required instructional material, if a digital rental of a textbook is an option, then you may use that digital rental price (pre-tax) as the price of the textbook in question. Otherwise, you must use the price (pre-tax) of purchasing the material new, not used or as a rental, through the College Bookstore.

The LTC designation is based on the cost of *new* materials, not the used or rental price, because it cannot be guaranteed that enough used or rental copies are available for the entire class. Digital rentals are the exception because there is no limit to how many can be purchased.

The LTC designation is based on the cost of materials *through the College Bookstore* because, while books may be less expensive elsewhere, students using financial aid must often purchase them from the bookstore. Furthermore, texts available at the bookstore are equally accessible to all students, regardless of their access to credit cards or a mailing address. Contact the bookstore manager for help with bookstore pricing.

## -----Some FAQs-----

### What if instructional materials are recommended but not required?

If all materials are recommended but not required, then the course can be marked as a no-cost section under category A.

### What about courses where the instructor provides all of the instructional materials and textbooks for free?

This falls under category B or C, depending on whether the materials are online or hard copies. As long as no instructional material or textbook costs are passed onto students, these sections are designated as no-cost sections. Courses with no textbooks can be listed as no-cost sections under category A.

### What if a course uses free online textbooks that have an option to print or purchase for a fee?

In this scenario, you can report category B. It is category B since students can access the textbook for free online and are not required to print or purchase the textbook.

### What if my class uses a free online textbook but students are required to print out pages or other material?

If the cost of printing is under \$50, then it is considered an LTC section, that is, it falls under category D. Because the printouts are required, it cannot be marked as a no-cost section.

### How about if the lecture class uses a free online text but the lab requires a lab manual?

There are two possible scenarios here:

One, if the lab manual is not free, but does cost less than \$50 to purchase or print, then the lecture and lab sections would both be marked as LTC sections. In other words, they would both be placed under category D.

Two, if the lab manual is also entirely free to students (in addition to the materials required for the lecture), then the lecture and lab sections would both be marked as no-cost sections, under category B or C, depending on whether the materials are online or hard copies.

## What if my class is part of a two-part course sequence that uses the same book over two semesters and the book is \$90. Can it be marked as LTC?

No, it cannot because not all students take all of the courses in that sequence. They may take it at different colleges and with different instructors who may use different books. Students may not take the courses in sequence immediately and may have to buy a new textbook if the edition changes. In other words, this scenario falls under category Y.

## Why is \$50 the limit for LTC?

There is no statewide definition of what makes a course low-cost. The range for an LTC course is \$30-50 around the state. At Peralta, we decided to use under \$50 after consultation with faculty, students, and the bookstores.

## What is the benefit of having an LTC or ZTC icon?

Students can easily see which classes are no or low cost. Studies have shown that students enroll in ZTC and LTC classes more than non ZTC and LTC classes.

## What if a course is marked as ZTC or LTC but the instructor is replaced by a new instructor? Does the new instructor have to keep the ZTC or LTC designation?

No. Faculty have the right to choose their instructional materials. Some departments use the same texts for multiple sections but instructors ultimately make their own decisions about their materials. If the new instructor chooses materials that would change the ZTC or LTC designation, they should notify the Dean, Department Chair, and campus scheduler so that the designation is removed from the online schedule. Enrolled students should also be notified of the change.

## Further questions?

Some further frequently asked questions about OER, ZTC, and LTC are answered [in this document](#).