

Policy on Low-Enrolled and Under-Enrolled Courses

This document updates the April 2018 policy statement "[Guidelines for Low-Enrolled Undergraduate Courses](#)."

The university is improved, and its financial stability protected, when care is taken to be both efficient and equitable in considering course enrollments. The following guidelines serve as the basis for decisions regarding 4-credit undergraduate, academic-year courses that are low-enrolled or under-enrolled following the initial registration period for continuing students.¹

Best practices for curriculum management proactively reduce or avoid the unplanned occurrence of low-enrolled and under-enrolled courses, rather than having to react to insufficient enrollment. It is expected that deans will act with awareness of both curricular and budgetary needs in working with faculty and program leadership to build course schedules, and that faculty development, areas of expertise, and workload will be considered when enrollments indicate that modifications to the course schedule may be necessary.

Academic units are also advised to thoughtfully consider curricular design and/or course sequencing in order to minimize the need to make adjustments once registration has begun. Such strategic planning lessens the need to make difficult decisions about low-enrolled and under-enrolled courses. To this end, prior to finalizing a term's course schedule, academic units and programs are responsible for using both historical data (supplied by the provost's and registrar's offices as needed) and ongoing program review to anticipate expected enrollments in order to help identify courses at risk for low or under-enrollment.

Low-Enrolled Courses

The university defines a *low-enrolled course* as a 4-credit course with fewer than 6 students enrolled one week after the conclusion of the registration period for continuing students. Courses with fewer than 6 students after that time will generally be canceled. Rare exceptions will be granted by the provost's office in consultation with the college dean.

The presence of chronically low-enrolled courses in the curriculum should be taken as a sign that change is needed. Programs should initiate curricular revisions to replace or better support low-enrolled courses. In the event a historically low-enrolled course (low enrolled more than once in the past three years) is scheduled, the program will be asked for a back-up plan for re-allocating faculty time in the event the course is low-enrolled again.

Under-Enrolled Courses

The university defines an *under-enrolled course* as a 4-credit course with 6 to 10 students enrolled one week after the conclusion of the registration period for continuing students. Courses with 6 to 10 enrolled students after that time will be evaluated by the provost's office in consultation with the college dean and may be canceled. Rare exceptions will be granted by the provost's office in consultation with the college dean.

The presence of chronically under-enrolled courses in the curriculum should be taken as a sign that change is needed. Programs should initiate curricular revisions to replace or better support under-enrolled courses. In the event an under-enrolled course is scheduled (under-enrolled more than twice in a three

¹ Summer courses are reviewed by the provost's office. One and two credit courses are evaluated by the college dean.

year period), programs will be asked for their back-up plans for re-allocating faculty time if the course is again under-enrolled.

Course Cancellations

Decisions about course cancellations should be made within three weeks of the conclusion of the initial registration period to allow time for departments to reallocate faculty resources and for enrolled students to find new course options. The associate provost for undergraduate programs will initiate the conversation with college deans to determine the appropriate action.

If a course is canceled, academic units must find appropriate pathways for affected students' degree completion. These pathways should be noted in students' advising records.

Because of expectations for faculty teaching loads delineated in the Faculty Handbook, when a course is canceled or taught out of load the resulting reduction in teaching-load credit needs to be remedied. There are three options available to faculty when class cancellations are necessary:

1. Teach another 4-credit class the same academic year.
2. Receive reduced pay commensurate with reduced load (The reduction for a four-credit course will typically be at the rate of the minimum salary for a four-credit course taught by a non-benefits eligible contingent.)
3. Teach an additional 4-credit class the next academic year with no overload pay.

No tenured or tenure-track faculty member will be required to move to a reduced load for reduced pay (a reconfigured contract) in response to having a course canceled or taught out of load. However, faculty may choose this resolution in preference to other options.