

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS  
MINIMUM COURSE ENROLLMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES  
Adopted January 31, 2017

## MOTIVATION

Our instructional resources, i.e., faculty, are precious and limited. It is incumbent on all of us to be good stewards of these resources and deploy them as efficiently and effectively as possible. One aspect of being a good steward is ensuring that courses are offered to a reasonable number of students. However, it is also recognized that in higher education we are not producing widgets and that factors in addition to economic efficiency also deserve due consideration. The following policies and procedures vis-à-vis minimum course enrollments represent a balance among economic, pedagogical, programmatic, safety and other concerns. The primary goal of the policy is NOT to eliminate courses indiscriminately or force closure of programs. The primary goal is to encourage departments in the college to make strategic changes in their programs such that courses offered have reasonable enrollments while still achieving learning objectives and outcomes in those programs.

## POLICY

The following policy will go into effect starting the fall semester 2017.

- 1) With the exception of the cases noted below, courses may be taught only if they meet a minimum enrollment of 15 students for lower-division undergraduate (100-, 200-level), 10 for upper-division undergraduate (300-, 400-level), and 5 for graduate (500-, 600-, 700-, 800-) courses.
- 2) Concurrently taught upper-division undergraduate (400-level) and graduate courses (600-level) will be deemed to have satisfied enrollment minima if either the combined enrollment of undergraduate plus graduate students is at least 10 or the enrollment of graduate students alone is at least 5.
- 3) If taught as separate lecture sections, minimum enrollment limits apply to individual sections of the same course. However, if individual sections reflect only individual laboratory, tutorial, sessions sharing a single common lecture, then the section enrollments may be added together.
- 4) Courses such as Study Abroad, Undergraduate Research, Field Experience, Practicum/Internship, Master's Thesis, and Doctoral Dissertation are automatically exempt. Courses that require attendance at departmental seminars/colloquia and are a degree requirement are also exempt.
- 5) Courses required for accreditation/certification are exempt.
- 6) Courses such as Independent Study, Directed Study, etc. may be granted an exemption if they can be demonstrated to be one-time offerings and are not being used to circumvent the minimum enrollment limits. Examples of possible exemptions include a first-time test offering that may develop into a new course or a course specifically designed for an individual student. In any case, such courses may only count towards an individual faculty member's normal teaching load if given prior approval by the Dean.

- 7) Specific courses may receive special dispensation, subject to prior approval by the Dean, for compelling reasons related to pedagogy, programmatic considerations, safety, and space or equipment constraints. As an example, laboratory courses will normally be exempt.
- 8) If a course is cancelled because of lack of required enrollment, the faculty member teaching that class should be reassigned to teach an equivalent course or to take on special service/outreach/research tasks with specific deliverable outcomes beyond what would have been expected if the original course was taught. The teaching reassignment option is preferred. Alternatively, if an appropriate new teaching assignment is not feasible in the semester in question, the faculty member can be assigned an extra course the following fall or spring semester.

## PROCEDURES

It is noted that the timing of the decision to cancel a course is critical. The decision must be made sufficiently early that the students can find alternative courses and department chairs/heads can make alternative assignments of faculty to other courses or tasks, but not so early as to forestall significant additional enrollment. It is also noted that the intent of the policy above is primarily to deal with systematic, long-term enrollment issues and not occasional random fluctuations in enrollment. Therefore, the following procedures shall be followed in enforcing the above policy:

- 1) Decisions to cancel a course will be based not only on current enrollment data, but also historical enrollment trends. A course which has historically been above minimum enrollments but dips below the requisite minimum in any one year may be allowed to go forward. Likewise, courses that have historically been below minimum enrollments will not likely be allowed to move forward unless there has been a substantial change in circumstance that can reasonably be expected to result in an enrollment increase above the minimum.
- 2) New courses, for which there is no historical record of enrollment, generally shall be exempt from the enrollment minima the first two times they are taught. However, after two consecutive times offered, such courses will be treated identically to established courses.
- 3) Significant structural changes may need to be made to a program's curriculum, individual course design, etc. to deal with courses that have been under-enrolled historically.
- 4) No later than February of each year (starting in 2017), the Dean will meet with each department chair/head and review historic enrollment data for all courses intended to be offered the following year. Courses with a history of under-enrollment or that have been trending downward in recent years will be the focus of the discussion. A decision not to offer some of these courses may be made at that time, especially if there are no acceptable plans to change the *status quo*. Actual enrollments in fall courses (primarily undergraduate courses) that make it through the first cut will also be reviewed in July and some may be cancelled if they are projected to not meet the minimum enrollment in spite of attempted changes. Similarly, actual enrollments in spring courses will be reviewed in November of the preceding calendar year.