

**Low Enrolled Course Cancellation Policy**  
**Fall and Spring Semesters**  
**Revised January, 2021**

The following policy has been developed in order to more effectively ensure that students are able to finalize schedules in a timely fashion in order to avoid negative impacts on completion and/or financial aid, monitor Colleges resources particularly pertaining to costs associated with Temporary Services, and provide departments with adequate time to assign faculty to an appropriate course load. Perhaps most importantly, this process is intended to promote dialogue across departmental faculty and with their deans regarding continuous improvement and assessment of courses and programs. In addition, this review is integral to the current process for requesting adjuncts/overloads through SUNY administration.

A “course” is defined as a lecture, seminar, lab, recitation, or group studio regardless of course modality. For the purposes of current fiscal planning for our campus, a “low enrolled course” is defined as having less than 15 students for undergraduate classes and less than 8 students for a graduate class. (Note: Per our campus policy, a newly developed online course may run with a minimum of 5 total students the first time it is delivered online.) It is important to note that minimums are not to be used as the threshold for “splitting” courses. Courses can only be split into multiple sections upon approval by the Dean. **Department chairs are to work with their dean in those cases where exceptions to the minimums are warranted due to the launch of new programs, limitations imposed by facilities or equipment, or other relevant factors.** The overall FTE of departmental faculty could also be considered in these deliberations.

The following process is adopted:

- Chairs are to closely monitor course enrollments, and communicate to deans on a regular basis regarding courses that have the potential for low enrollments.
  - Note: if a course is combined with other sections, and consequently has a total enrollment of over 15 (undergraduate) or over 8 (graduate), and is being counted as one “load” for that faculty member, the course is not considered as low enrolled.
  - Note: in some graduate and extension site programs, students routinely register for classes late; chairs are to proactively work with the Graduate Office to encourage students’ timely registration but also to keep the dean apprised of any expected late registrations.
- For those courses identified as low enrolled, the chairs have the following three options (below). For the fall semester, these actions are to be taken no later than one week after grades are due for upper division courses and after the majority of first-year students have registered for lower division courses. For the spring semester, low enrolled courses should be cancelled one full week after grades are due, and the justification spreadsheet should be submitted to the dean five business days after January 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Cancel the course; or
  - Submit the **Low Enrolled Course Request Spreadsheet**; or
  - Implement an alternative strategy—such as combining the course with another section or with a similar/complementary course, or using a Distance Learning classroom to offer the course at multiple locations—to enable the assigned faculty member to have a complete load. Approval for the alternative strategy is to be documented on the **Low Enrolled Course Spreadsheet**.

- Final decisions regarding offering or cancelling low enrolled courses are made no later than one month prior to the start of the semester. In order to be held, low enrolled courses must have the approval of the dean and provost.

Faculty Assignments. For courses that are cancelled, it is the expectation that the deans will work with the chairs as quickly as possible to ensure that all full-time faculty members have a full teaching load, as defined by their contract. Only in very rare circumstances are faculty members to be given an “alternative assignment” due to a cancelled course; these assignments must be approved by the provost. The following strategies could be considered when reassigning the affected faculty member:

- Reassignment to a required course that is in high demand
- Opening another section of an existing course that has a wait list
- Expansion of enrollment in another course that the instructor is teaching
- As directed and approved by the dean and provost, assignment to administrative, research, or other duties that are normally compensated with course release in the school, department, or division

Course Review. For consistently low enrolled courses (i.e., low enrolled for three consecutive semesters in which it is offered), it is expected that the dean and chair/program director meet to discuss the following and develop a written plan of action:

- What are the contributing factors to this course’s low enrollment?
- How can these factors be addressed?
- Does the consistency of low enrolled courses indicate that changes be made to requirements in the major?
- Are there other alternatives for electives that have the potential to be fully enrolled?
- Is this course scheduled too often? Or at times when students are unable to take the course?
- Is this a course that should be moved to the summer session?
- Is this course part of a new/revised program or change in program location? If so, what are the planned strategies to increase enrollment for future course offerings?
- Are there alternative strategies that could be used that would allow this course to be held? (e.g., combining with another course section or with similar courses so that it is counted as one load, using distance learning to combine course sections, etc.)

If there is a consistent pattern of multiple low-enrolled courses in a program, the chair will initiate dialogue with their dean and faculty in order to consider broader curricular issues and program revisions.

Notification to Students. It is critical that affected students be notified immediately so that they can work with their advisors to modify their course schedules to ensure they have a full load, avoid jeopardizing financial aid, and have the coursework necessary to remain on their path to timely graduation. Notification to students must be made before they are deregistered from the cancelled course.

- While all affected students should be accommodated, deans and chairs/program directors should pay special attention to seniors preparing to graduate, international students, students on financial aid, students who need special accommodations for disabilities and may have chosen a class on this basis, and students who require full-time enrollment or who have specific

minimum credit hour requirements (for example, Homeland Security requires international students to be enrolled full time).

- If a cancelled course is required for graduation and the affected students are in their last semester before graduation, or the students are nearing graduation and cannot be accommodated in the class the following semester without disrupting their path to degree completion, deans and chairs/program directors should identify alternative courses or directed studies that fit the affected students' schedule and maintain the integrity of the academic program. These alternatives should be identified in advance and communicated to affected students.
- If a cancelled course is a prerequisite for other required courses, programs will need to identify appropriate alternative courses as the prerequisite. If the cancelled course is a prerequisite to courses in other departments, deans and chairs/program directors must notify affected departments as soon as and work collaboratively to identify acceptable alternatives. When possible, deans, chairs, and program coordinators should document these agreements for future course planning.