

# University of Utah Guidelines for Cancellation of Courses Due to Low Enrollment<sup>1</sup>

## Purpose and Context

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that course cancellations due to low enrollment are handled in a manner that minimizes disruption to students and faculty, maintains the financial sustainability of the institution, and supports equitable teaching loads among faculty, and shifts the U's culture of maximum capacity to one of engaging the true instructional capacity of the institution.<sup>2</sup> Small class sizes can be beneficial, but they must be balanced with financial realities and institutional priorities.

## Minimum Enrollment Requirements

Courses that do not meet the minimum enrollment thresholds should be canceled unless they fall under specific exceptions. The minimum enrollment requirements are as follows:

- Lower-division undergraduate (1000 and 2000-level) classes: 20 students
- Upper-division undergraduate (3000 and 5000-level) classes: 15 students

## Exceptions to Minimum Enrollment

Exceptions to the minimum enrollment policy may be made in the following cases:

- 1. Degree Progress:** When cancellation would delay or impede students' progress toward their degree and no alternative classes are available.
- 2. Capstone and Honors Courses:** Courses offering unique, intensive experiences, limited in number, and approved by the dean.
- 3. Core Educational Classes:** Classes with low maximum enrollments for pedagogical reasons, such as composition or introductory language courses, may be canceled if below 2/3 of the class maximum.
- 4. Independent Study Courses:** Courses such as directed study or thesis/dissertation work are exempt from these guidelines.
- 5. Private 1:1 Instruction:** Courses that require 1:1 instruction are exempt from these guidelines.
- 6. New Courses:** Courses that are new to the curriculum are exempt from these guidelines for three years.

## Course Cancellation Procedures

- 1. Timing:** Classes not meeting minimum enrollment should be canceled *at least one week before the start of the term*.

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<sup>1</sup> These guidelines are based on review of guidelines at the following institutions: [U. Georgia](#), [U. Illinois-Chicago](#), and [U. Oregon](#).

<sup>2</sup> <https://eab.com/resources/blog/unknown/7-behaviors-that-guarantee-inaccurate-course-capacities/>

**2. Responsibility:** The department head is responsible for cancellations, communication with students, and reassigning faculty duties. This task may be delegated as appropriate.

**3. Communication:** Students and academic advising staff must be notified immediately upon cancellation. Efforts should be made to help affected students find alternative courses.

**4. Faculty Adjustments:** Instructors of canceled courses should be reassigned to other teaching duties or given alternative professional assignments in accordance with collective bargaining agreements and institutional policies.

### **Guidelines for Affected Students**

**1. Alternative Courses:** Increase seats in alternative courses (e.g., Fall 2 or Spring 2) and ensure they are scheduled at compatible times for affected students.

**2. Graduation Requirements:** Ensure that course cancellations do not hinder students' timely progression to graduation. If necessary, approve alternative courses as substitutes.

**3. Prerequisite Courses:** Work with other departments to find acceptable alternatives for canceled prerequisite courses.

**4. Special Considerations:** Pay special attention to seniors, international students, students on financial aid, students requiring disability accommodations, any student on a waiting list, and those needing full-time enrollment.

### **Faculty and Instructor Considerations**

**1. Reassignments:** Strategies may include reassignment to high-demand courses, opening new sections, expanding enrollments, or assigning administrative or research duties.

**2. Adjuncts and Instructors:** Provide reasonable notice of potential cancellations and explore reassignment options where possible.

**3. Teaching Assistants:** Strategies may include scheduling additional discussion sections, opening new sections, or using TAs as graders for larger classes.

### **Planning and Coordination**

**1. Enrollment Histories:** Examine past enrollment data to anticipate and address potential low-enrollment courses proactively.

**2. Strategic Scheduling:** Use enrollment benchmarks to inform class scheduling and curriculum changes to avoid future cancellations.

**3. Collaboration:** Work with relevant departments and administrative offices to ensure effective communication and minimize disruption.

*For further questions or clarifications, please contact Office of the Registrar; for guidance regarding the guidelines in relation to Policy 6-100, please reach out to the Vice Provost for Student Success.*