

Minimum Class Size Policy

Portland State University

August 24, 2009

Policy Objectives: Although it is assumed that most classes will exceed the minimum enrollments, Portland State University's minimum class size policy is designed to ensure ongoing curricular effectiveness and the efficient use of resources through program planning. Analyses of reports on class offerings and class size will include enrollment as well as the review of course contributions to:

- Educational quality, including the contribution to the curriculum,
- Student success, especially progress towards the degree, and
- Efficient use of resources, including classroom space.

Class Size Minimums: The following minimums should apply:

- Undergraduate lecture class (100-300 level) – 20
- Senior level undergraduate class (400 level) – 15
- Undergraduate seminar, community-based learning, writing intensive and capstone classes – 15
- Graduate (500 level) and combined 400/500 classes – 15
- Graduate level combined classes (500/600 level) - 10

Exceptions to Minimum Class Size: There are both pedagogical and practical reasons why certain classes should be exempt from this policy. Requests for exceptions should be made to the dean who has final authority for the decision. Specific exemptions include:

- Experimental classes which may be offered twice at the dean's discretion before being subject to the minimum enrollment policy
- Other classes in which a low student to faculty ratio is integral to maintaining quality (i.e. certain performance classes in music and labs, studios, and classes requiring the use of specialized equipment)
- Reading and conference courses, practicum seminars, internships, thesis and dissertation credits
- Classes for which the cost to the university would not make it reasonable to cancel the class (e.g. courses where the costs are paid with external funds, self support classes or Chiron courses).

Review Process: The Dean's Office will receive a class size listing from OIRP annually in the Fall for review with department chairs. If the enrollment of any course offered over the most recent three-year period is less than the class size minimum, the course may be cancelled for the subsequent year at the initiation of the dean. Following consultation with appropriate department chairs, it will be the dean's decision how best to balance the objectives of academic quality, student success, and fiscal viability. Deans will include a report on low enrollment classes along with their SCH projections in the Winter.

Potential Responses to Classes with Low Enrollment: Class size policy implementation should occur through regular and effective course review and curricular planning. However, the policy for low enrollment classes can result in the cancellation of classes at any time and the assignment of another class or set of activities to the affected faculty member. Deans and department chairs should be proactive in scheduling classes in a manner that will maximize the enrollment by considering the following actions:

- Offering some courses every other year, and/or
- Reorganizing the curriculum to include key material from consistently under-enrolled classes in other offerings.