**AUGUSTANA COURSE CAPACITY POLICIES (updated 1/9/24)**

Course cap policies are designed to balance three competing priorities: pedagogical, financial, and workload equity. Our underlying principles are (1) caps should allow for effective instruction, (2) caps should reflect financially sustainable policies and (3) caps should not unfairly burden some faculty for the benefit of others.

This policy will cover four topics: (1) normal maximum course sizes, (2) normal minimum course enrollments, (3) procedures for requesting a variance in the policies, and (4) procedures for dealing with an under-enrolled course.

**1. Normal maximum course sizes**

All two-credit and four-credit courses without specific exceptions should be offered with an enrollment capacity at or above the caps listed below.[[1]](#footnote-1)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Course Caps** | **Semester or Term** | |
| **Course Level** | **Spring/Fall** | **J-term** |
| Lower Division  (100/200 level) | 30 | 20 |
| Upper Division  (300/400 level) | 25 | 20 |

Creative production courses (writing, art, production, etc.) courses will be capped at 20.

Courses with multiple sections should have **the same enrollment capacities across sections** to ensure a consistent student experience and fair faculty workload.

**2. Normal minimum course enrollments**

If a course does not meet the minimum of enrolled students by the deadlines listed below, the course or section will be canceled. The minimum enrollment number for multi-section courses may be higher if students from a canceled course could be absorbed into another section or sections.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Course Level** | **Minimum Course Enrollments** |
| Lower Division (100/200 level) | 15 |
| Upper Division (300/400 level) | 10 |
| Senior Inquiry | 6 |

**3. Procedures for requesting a variance in the policies**

Department chairs are not authorized to unilaterally set lower maximum course sizes. Variances are the responsibility of the office of Academic Affairs (or through divisional deans). Once a variance has been formally agreed upon, it will remain in effect for succeeding years without the need for further justification. Courses with lower caps and without variances will be reset to the normal minimum size in the master schedule.

Exceptions are entirely justified in a variety of circumstances: senior inquiry courses that are project based, courses limited by the size of the teaching spaces available, number of software licenses, amount of available equipment, and so on.

In those or other cases, chairs should request an exception to these guidelines using the “Minimum Course Cap Exception Request” form. Those requests will be reviewed and responded to by the Division Deans. Academic Affairs will maintain a list of approved exceptions to inform future course scheduling cycles.

**Deadlines to meet minimum enrollment requirements**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Course Level** | **Fall Semester and J-Term Courses** | **Spring Semester Courses** |
| Lower Division (100/200 level) | Academic Affairs monitors course enrollments based on FY enrollment numbers and will contact chairs in Spring or Summer if course changes are needed. | End of the final Fall assigned registration window for **FY** **students**  (prior to open registration). |
| Upper Division (300/400) | End of the final Spring assigned registration window for **Juniors** (prior to open registration). | End of the final Fall assigned registration window for **Juniors** (prior to open registration). |

These deadlines exist to encourage students to register in a timely fashion, to allow them time to enroll in an alternate course if needed, and to allow the instructor to teach a different course that term, if possible.

**4. Procedures for dealing with an under-enrolled course.**

**It is important for chairs to monitor course enrollments through the registration process** so that they can be proactive in addressing low-enrollment courses. If a course has not met minimum enrollment by the deadlines listed above, chairs will be asked to do one of the following:

* Cancel the course. If a course cancelation will result in a full-time faculty member being underload, please consult with the provost about the best way to replace the load. In determining a course replacement, the following will be considered:
  + Whether there is an existing need for FYI instructors.
  + Whether there is a need for more seats in Learning Perspective courses.
  + Whether there is a need for more FY advisors.
  + Whether a proposed course addition to the schedule is likely to fill given the point at which it would be added in the registration process.
  + Whether a displaced faculty member can step into a course currently scheduled with a part-time/adjunct faculty member.
* Submit a written request for an exception to the minimum course enrollment policy. The request should include the following information:
  + A clear explanation of why you believe the course is needed. If the course is required for the major/minor, be sure to explain why students are unable to complete the requirement in a different way (e.g. through a course substitution or by completing the same requirement in another semester).
  + Whether you’re proposing a reduced load for the instructor (WLLC and Education are among the departments that currently follow this practice in order to offer low-enrolled courses and may be helpful resources in exploring this option).
  + Your plan for reducing the likelihood of future low enrollments in the course (e.g. offering the course on an every-other-year basis, considering changes to major/minor requirements, etc.)
* In the special case of under-enrolled Senior Inquiry courses, additional options may be available (e.g. compensate faculty with a per-student stipend rather than counting in faculty load, “bank” student enrollment year-to-year and assign faculty load when the minimum enrollment has been reached, or other creative load solutions).

All requests will be reviewed and responded to by the provost, division dean, or another member of the Academic Affairs team within two working days of its receipt.

1. It’s important to acknowledge that some courses, particularly in the natural sciences, regularly exceed the caps listed below. Additionally, there are times that chairs may be asked to increase course caps to meet unexpected student demand. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)