

Protocols for Setting/Revising Course Caps

Summary Guidelines:

This policy is designed to create a standard enrollment cap policy to address past inequities in enrollment caps across departments and colleges. While the past method of departments negotiating their enrollment caps with their dean worked for some departments, it did not work in the same way for all departments. Enrollment caps were at the discretion of the dean and there was inequity in the way enrollment caps were set across colleges and departments. In some instances, there was up to a 30% difference in enrollment caps in courses with similar considerations.

The goal of this policy is to provide an equitable and transparent process for setting enrollment caps. It also provides a collaborative process for faculty and departments to request lower enrollment caps for courses the departments think need lower caps due to a variety of reasons such as pedagogical, equipment, feedback intensive, safety concerns, to name a few. The policy seeks to provide clear parameters and processes for when a course may be granted a lower enrollment cap.

These will be the minimum course caps:

- With the exception of internships, arranged courses, applied lessons, and independent studies, the minimum acceptable course cap for any class will be 25 (note further exceptions below).
- Course caps for 1000-level courses will be set at a minimum of 40 or at the average enrollment level over the past two academic years, if higher. They will be set at available room capacity if all classrooms that can accommodate 40 students are occupied. (The Academic Deans' Council and faculty, through the collaborative process, will recommend to the Provost the protocols through which classrooms accommodating 40 will be assigned when there aren't enough to meet demand.).
- Course caps for 2000-level courses will be a minimum of 35 or at the average enrollment level over the past two academic years, if higher.
- Course caps for 3000-level and 4000-level will be a minimum of 30 or at the average enrollment level over the past two academic years, if higher. This includes courses cross-listed as 5000-level courses.
- Course caps for 6000-level courses or graduate only 5000 level courses will be set at a minimum of 25 or at the average enrollment level over the past two academic years, if higher.
- Course caps for summer courses will be set at a minimum of 80% of the course cap during the academic year.

The following are exceptions to the minimum caps described above:

- For courses warranting specialized equipment and/or safety considerations (e.g. labs), room capacity will be set at the capacity of the equipment.
- Enrollment caps below 25 will always be set at the maximum allowed by special circumstances.

- For courses that the dean agrees fit established criteria identifying writing intensive and/or speaking intensive pedagogies, the minimum cap will be set to 25, irrespective of level.
 - **Criteria for Speaking Intensive Courses:**
 - At least 60% of the course grade is based on speaking presentation assignments
 - At least 50% of class time is used for speaking presentations
 - Speaking is central to course pedagogy and learning outcomes
 - Multiple graded speaking assignments/presentations distributed across the semester and with in-depth feedback for developing speaking skills
 - **Criteria for Writing Intensive Courses:**
 - At least 40% of course grade is based on writing (*see definition below*)
 - Writing is central to course pedagogy and learning outcomes
 - Writing assignments are multiple and distributed across the semester
 - Multiple graded revisions or repeated assignments developing writing skills
 - Functional definition of “writing” for use with these criteria:
 - Copy development
 - Content creation that requires detailed, in-depth, individual feedback
 - **Criteria for other Extenuating Circumstances**
 - In cooperation with their departments, the faculty member may petition their dean to have a course cap set below the minimum. The following are examples of extenuating circumstances that may merit below-minimum caps:
 - Feedback-intensive courses (requiring extensive time in responding to individual assignments)
 - Sensitive topics (e.g., child abuse, intimate-partner violence)
 - Specialized equipment or safety protocols that limits capacity
 - Service-learning or community-engaged projects
 - Intensive capstone experiences
 - Courses with accreditation or certification requirements
- For online courses, the minimum cap (with the exception of writing intensive and speaking intensive courses) will be 35 for 1000-level and 2000-level courses and 30 for 3000-, 4000-, 3000/5000-, and 4000/5000-level courses (or at the average enrollment level over the past two academic years, if higher).

Process:

Here is how course caps will be determined:

- Faculty members will propose their course caps through their department chair, noting any equipment limitations or special consideration that should be taken into account (i.e. this is the point at which requests for exceptions to the minimum cap should be made).
- The chair shall review all faculty proposals to determine whether they are consistent with departmental practice and make whatever adjustments are appropriate. The chair will then forward all proposed course caps to the dean as part of the draft schedule.
- The dean will work with the department chair and faculty to approve or adjust course caps according to the guidelines presented above.

- Whenever enrollments are restricted by equipment and/or facilities, the Provost may seek to add equipment and/or facilities to make increases to caps possible within whatever safety and educational requirements apply.

These guidelines were developed by a joint workgroup consisting of the following faculty and administrators during the 2020-21 academic year.

- Valica Boudry, Professor of Integrated Media
- Season Ellison, Assistant Professor of Humanities
- Tiffany Holmes, Professor of Nursing
- Lynn Johnson, Executive Director of Distance Learning
- Angie Kovarik, Associate Professor of Business Administration
- Amber Laffin, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice: Police Science and Leadership
- Dennis Lunt, Assistant Professor of Philosophy
- Donna Pawlowski, Professor of Communication Studies
- MaryTheresa Seig, Dean of the College of Arts, Education and Humanities
- Randy Westhoff, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (Interim)
- Jim White, Dean of the College of Individual and Community Health
- Marilyn Yoder, Dean of the College of Business, Mathematics and Science