

Policy on the Continuation of Low Award Producing Academic Programs (Degree/Majors and Certificates)

<http://apir.wisc.edu/programreview.htm>

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Discussed by University Academic Planning Council, April 21, 2016

Adopted by the University Academic Planning Council, June 21, 2010

Revised from May 1995 Program Review Guidelines

The following criteria define an academic program as low award producing:

- The standard for triggering low award producing status in a major is that fewer than five (5) degrees have been awarded in five (5) years. This standard applies to UW-Madison's graduate and professional degree/majors (master's degrees that are associated with a PhD may not be identified as low award producing). It also applies to all UW-Madison undergraduate degree/majors that have counterparts at fewer than half of other UW institutions.
- For undergraduate degree/majors that have counterpart offerings at more than half of all UW institutions, then the degree productivity standard is at least 25 degrees awarded in a five (5) year period, excluding all world language programs and individually designed programs¹. UW-Madison programs that have counterparts at more than half of other UWs typically have strong enrollments and would rarely drop below this higher threshold.
- The standard for triggering low award producing status in a certificate program is that fewer than ten (10) certificates have been awarded in five (5) years. Certificates that have zero (0) awards over a five (5) year period will be automatically discontinued without review. This applies to all UW-Madison undergraduate, graduate/professional, and Capstone certificates.

For a low award producing program the provost will request a focused review from the dean, and specify a schedule for a status report that will include a plan for program change or a rationale for continuing the program as outlined below. The schedule may be adjusted by mutual agreement.

In general, the expectation is that either a compelling case will be made for continuation, or the low award producing programs will be discontinued or reorganized. For some programs, they may award few degrees because they serve a specialized audience. For other programs, when few degrees are awarded it may be a signal that the commitment of program faculty has waned or that the program does not serve student or societal needs.

The following possibilities for handling low award producing programs should be considered:

¹ Definition aligns with UW System Policy ACIS 1, "Monitoring Low-Degree-Producing Academic Degree Programs", July 1, 2016.

- Discontinue the program.
- Merge smaller programs into an appropriate larger program with a more inclusive scope.
- Merge several low-enrollment programs into one more inclusive title.
- Make the program available to the occasional student through the Individual Major at the Bachelor's level or the Special Committee Degree at the graduate level.

If there is an interest among program faculty to continue a low award producing program, they should develop a written rationale based on the following criteria and other criteria that may emerge:

- What is the demonstrated student interest and social need for graduates with this specific credential?
- Does the program fill a specific academic niche unique to UW-Madison or in some way necessary for the University's identity, or for the fulfillment of the mission of the program, school/college, or university?
- What is the cost of the program? No program is without cost so a clear recognition of all costs is important. All programs incur costs in terms of record keeping and a range of monitoring activities for the school/college, the Registrar's Office, the Graduate School, the Office of the Provost, and others.
- Is faculty time and effort best invested in such a program? Even for a very small program, time must be devoted to recruitment of students, curriculum development, academic and career advising, catalog and website maintenance, course scheduling, learning outcomes assessment, review of the program, and similar academic oversight activities. Programs with few or no students that are formally offered still need to have a full curriculum available to a student who seeks to enroll in the program and all of the academic oversight activities must continue to be active.
- What are the compelling reasons why none of the options outlined above (merging this major into a larger major, or offering it as an individual major) are viable alternatives?
- Does the program have a stable academic home (usually a department) that will provide the needed resources to maintain the program?

The director of APIR, the provost, and the UAPC will review reports on the status of low award producing programs. If a low award producing program is continued, it will be placed in the 10-year cycle of program review.