

Appalachian State University

New and Continuing Distance Education Program Enrollment Policy on Minimum Admission Requirements

Introduction

The decision to start a new program, regardless of the delivery modality or level, represents a commitment to active students to provide them with the opportunity to achieve their educational goal. Programs with low enrollments are a financial challenge to the university that frequently result in a less-than-optimal experience for students and instructors. Thus, the following policy and procedures serve to guide the initiation of new, and continuation of existing programs that are delivered in partnership with the Distance Education Office (DE).

Definition of Terms

Start: The launch or initiation of a sequence of courses that constitute a program of study, whether delivered on-ground or online, or to a cohort or in a rolling-start format.

Cohort: A group of students who are admitted in a specific semester in a given academic year and matriculated through a set sequence of courses at a particular site or online. Should a cohort student need to take a term off, continuation in the program is often dependent on whether another cohort will be offered

Rolling-Start Format: A program whose schedule of courses enables on-going admission in most, if not all, academic terms. Rolling-Start programs enable students greater flexibility, including accommodating their need for breaks in their studies.

Teach out: The process of ceasing new student enrollment and assuring that all active students have access to all of the remaining courses in their program of study.

Policy

Graduate DE programs (cohorts or initial rolling admission) with fewer than 15 admitted applicants and undergraduate DE programs with fewer than 18 admitted applicants on the application deadline can not be approved to start by the Division of Educational Outreach and Summer Programs unless an exception is granted as outlined below. Further, in any given semester rolling-start formatted programs in which the total number of enrolled students (combination of continuing students and new admits) falls below 12 for a graduate program or 15 for an undergraduate program will immediately cease new admissions at that site (or online) and will be required to begin a teach-out process for all existing active students.

Implementation

To facilitate this policy, DE will make available a report that delineates the status of each DE-delivered program scheduled in the next term. Four weeks prior to the application deadline for a given term DE will publish to all concerned parties (including the Graduate School, the college, the department, etc.) a status report identifying those programs that are in danger of not meeting the required minimum number of students. Once this warning is issued the program and dean's office will develop a plan to a) recruit sufficient students, b) delay the start if

indicated and appropriate, c) seek an exception as outlined below, or d) cancel the program. DE staff will be available to provide input into this process as needed. Once the deadline has passed, the DE office will “green-light” those cohorts with either sufficient numbers (as outlined in the Policy section above) or those that have been granted an exception (see below). DE will subsequently consult with “red-lighted” programs (those that do not admit the required number of students) on a teach-out plan for remaining students.

Exceptions

Exceptions are anticipated and can be made by the provost in consultation with the college dean and DE. An exception might be granted when a) grant funding allows for low enrollments, b) a college chooses to average enrollments across more than one existing cohort, or c) a college or department chooses to continue with low enrollment to balance faculty workloads. Notification by the college of all exceptions will be made to all concerned parties in a timely manner.