

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

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

Revisions adopted by the University Academic Planning Council, June 16, 2016

Adopted by the University Academic Planning Council, June 21, 2010 Revised from May 1995 Program Review Guidelines

Definition of low award producing:

- The standard for triggering low award producing status in a degree/major is 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, the degree productivity standard is no less than 25 degrees are awarded in a five (5) year period, excluding all world language programs and individually designed programs¹. UW-Madison degree/majors 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 is 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.

A low award producing program will be scheduled for review in the academic year following the program's identification as low award producing. The provost will request a focused review from the dean, and specify a schedule for a status report. 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:

- Discontinue the program.
- Merge smaller programs into an appropriate larger program with a more inclusive scope.

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

- Merge several low-enrollment programs into one more inclusive title.

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

- What is the demonstrated student need, even at a low level, 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? Time must be devoted to learning outcomes assessment, review of the program, recruitment of students, curriculum development, advising, catalog and website maintenance, course scheduling, and similar 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.
- What are the compelling reasons why none of the options outlined above (discontinuing the program or merging this major into a larger major) are viable alternatives?
- Does the program have a stable academic home, usually a department?

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, and remains in low-award status it will be reviewed again after five years. If student participation increases and the program is no longer low-award status, it will go into the 10-year review cycle.