

**Minimum Enrollment Policy for Part-Time Faculty**  
**Ohio Wesleyan University**  
**July 2021**

**Introduction**

Ohio Wesleyan University seeks to offer the highest quality education to our students through exciting, rewarding, challenging, and meaningful courses. To support this goal, all departments have a shared interest in ensuring that teaching resources are allocated and used responsibly. To help protect our ability to effectively serve our students in the long-term, departments must work together to manage the curriculum such that we maintain financial responsibility. This policy on minimum course enrollments for sections taught by part-time faculty is provided to establish an institutional framework for clear, transparent, and equitable course enrollment management. With the introduction of this policy, we join many other institutions of higher education who have provided a clear link between the curriculum and financial sustainability.

**Policy**

The minimum enrollment for a full-unit or full-unit equivalent section taught by a part-time faculty member should be 10 students as determined on the Monday after the add/drop deadline. If the enrollment for a section is below 10, the base per-section salary rate will be prorated by the number of students in the course. For example, a section with an enrollment of 7 will be eligible for salary at the level of 70% of the base rate; a section with an enrollment of 4 will be eligible for salary at the level of 40% of the base rate. This policy does not apply to teaching activities that are part of the OWU Connection, which are compensated as described in the [Faculty Workload Plan](#). For example, this policy does not apply to independent studies, directed readings, and internships.

**Answers to Anticipated Questions**

***Why is Academic Affairs implementing this policy?***

This policy is being implemented to provide a clear and transparent link between the curricular and pedagogic work in academic departments and the financial sustainability of the institution. This policy is provided as a tool for each department to use in weighing what courses to offer, when to offer the courses, how to staff the courses, and how to structure the department's curriculum. This policy is also being implemented to help ensure fair, equitable, and consistent treatment of the few faculty who teach low-enrollment courses.

***Is a minimum enrollment policy new?***

No, a minimum enrollment policy is not new. Previously, Academic Affairs enforced a minimum enrollment policy requiring that a course have an enrollment of 5. Courses with enrollment below 5 were either canceled, or the instructor was given the option of teaching the course at the workload rate, which was \$281.25 per student.

***How does the new policy differ from the previous policy?***

This policy is different from the previous policy in two ways. First, this policy sets the threshold for minimum enrollment at 10 students. The previous policy had a minimum enrollment of 5. Second, this policy introduces a prorated salary at all enrollments below 10 students. Two consequences of this are that part-time faculty salaries in courses with enrollment of 1 to 4 will be at least 78% higher than under the previous policy and

salaries in these courses will now be linked to the faculty member's base rate, which is more respectful of rank, merit, and service. Salaries in courses with enrollments of 5 to 9 are now prorated while previously they were not.

***How many courses will be impacted by this policy?***

This policy is anticipated to impact a small percentage of sections. Had this policy been in place for the 2020-2021 academic year, approximately 8 sections (3.7% of the total) had enrollment between 1 and 4. These sections would be impacted by both the previous and the current minimum enrollment policy. However, faculty teaching these sections will now earn at least a 78% higher salary under the current policy than the previous one. In 2020-2021, approximately 26 sections (12% of the total) taught by part-time faculty had enrollment between 5 and 9. These sections would have been impacted by this current policy, and salaries would be prorated.

***How many courses are impacted this year?***

Preliminary enrollment data for fall 2021 as of July 20, 2021 indicate that this policy will impact approximately 8 out of 150 sections taught by part-time faculty. This is about 5% of the total.

***Does this policy create uncertainty about part-time salaries?***

Historical enrollment data indicate that 85% of sections taught by part-time faculty would be unaffected by this policy. Recent data indicate that the percent of sections not impacted by this policy is increasing to 95%. This policy should have no impact on the vast majority of part-time faculty and the sections they teach. For the small percentage of part-time faculty who are impacted, Academic Affairs will reach out proactively before the first pay period to make sure the part-time faculty member understands what their salary will be. Academic Affairs will work to minimize uncertainty.

***What if a part-time faculty member is concerned about the impact of this policy?***

Before signing a contract, part-time faculty should contact their department chair to ask about course enrollments so that they can make an informed decision about the level of uncertainty and risk they are willing to accept. Department chairs can review the course enrollment, historical enrollment trends, and expected new student enrollment with the part-time faculty member and have a discussion about likely enrollment for the sections in question. As mentioned in answers to other questions, only a small number of sections would have historically been impacted by this policy.

***How will part-time faculty know what they are being paid?***

Every part-time faculty member is provided with a contract listing the courses they are scheduled to teach and their base rate for each course when the enrollment is 10 or greater. They can discuss with their department chair whether the course is likely to enroll at 10 or above. After signing a contract, part-time faculty can check their course enrollments up to and on the add/drop deadline. They will be paid the base rate for each full-unit or full-unit equivalent section having an enrollment of 10 or above. In the rare case that a section's enrollment is below 10, part-time faculty will be paid the base rate times one-tenth of the enrollment for that section.

***Will part-time faculty be told that their salary is being prorated?***

Yes. After the add/drop period, the small number of part-time faculty whose salary is impacted by this policy will be contacted by Academic Affairs to be informed that the minimum enrollment policy applies and that their base rate is prorated as stated in their contracts. This will also give part-time faculty an opportunity to dispute the enrollment count with Academic Affairs (contact [djbrugh@owu.edu](mailto:djbrugh@owu.edu)). Part-time faculty should assume that their salaries are not being prorated unless they are specifically contacted by Academic Affairs.

***What should chairs do about communicating this policy to part-time faculty?***

Department chairs should make sure that all prospective part-time faculty hires are aware of the policy. Chairs should be open and transparent with candidates about historical enrollment patterns and the expected enrollment of the section or sections to be taught. Additionally, chairs should continue to work with their department to ensure that all courses are exciting and attractive to students, that the department's offerings are flexible and appropriate given the size of OWU's student body, and that courses are offered only with the right frequency. This will help ensure that this minimum enrollment policy will apply to fewer sections.

***Is there anything that can be done about enrollment in a course?***

Yes! Departments can impact enrollments by altering the frequency with which a course is offered, modifying the title, description, and/or content of the course, or altering the structure of the department's curriculum to be most relevant to students. Individual instructors concerned about section enrollments should reach out to their department chair to have a conversation about strategies for increasing enrollment. Department chairs can consult with the Assistant Provost for Curriculum and Equity and the two curriculum committees CAP and APAC. Maintaining course enrollments at 10 or above is a shared responsibility that requires proactively assessing and considering the most robust curricular offerings to support student learning and goals of the major.

***If the number of sections impacted is so low, do we need this policy?***

Yes. This policy is intended as a planning guide for departments. Financial sustainability requires that we all think in terms of keeping course enrollments up and that we make structural changes to curriculum and offerings when that becomes challenging. This policy provides practical guidance on what enrollments are considered financially sustainable. This policy also provides a consistent way to handle courses with enrollments below the enrollment minimum, helping to ensure equitable treatment of all part-time faculty.

***Does this policy offer any advantages to part-time faculty?***

It may. For example, a more rigid minimum enrollment policy might require that we cancel courses enrolling below a certain threshold, such as 10. In some cases, this might take away important opportunities for earning income. In some cases, OWU's prorated salary may be greater than that provided at surrounding institutions for similar courses. At present, a prorated salary at OWU with an enrollment of 8 or 9 is higher than that offered by many competitor institutions in the area.

***Is there any room for flexibility?***

Yes. There is always room for flexibility if conditions are substantially different than anticipated. Department chairs should reach out to the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs to have a discussion if they believe conditions merit an exception to this policy.

***What are some examples of possible exceptions to the policy?***

Courses that are part of the teach out may be exceptions to the policy. By their nature, courses required for the teach out will likely have low enrollments, and this may be out of the department's control. Before considering an exception to the policy, however, chairs may be asked to consider alternatives to offer the course as a regular course. Also, for part-time faculty teaching multiple courses in a given semester, some of which are enrolled above 25, it may be possible to consider a part-time faculty member's total enrollment holistically rather than individually. Please contact the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs to have a discussion.

***Who do I contact if I have questions not answered here?***

If you are a part-time faculty member concerned about the enrollment of your sections, please contact your department chairs. Your department chair can provide the best information about course enrollments. If you are a department chair and have additional questions, please contact the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs.