

Academic Operating Procedure 8



Low-Producing Minors and Certificates

Approved: July 8, 2025

AOP Statement

This Academic Operating Procedure (AOP) outlines the standards for identifying a minor or certificate program as low-producing. It establishes a process for identifying programs that fail to meet the institution's standards and adjudicates each program's continuation or termination.

The Low-Producing Minors and Certificates (LPMC) review aids in program planning and management, including creating new programs, consolidating existing programs, and closing programs that are no longer aligned with student and labor market demands.

Procedures and Responsibilities

1. STANDARDS FOR IDENTIFYING LOW-PRODUCING MINORS AND CERTIFICATES

1.1. The low production thresholds are as follows:

1.1.1. Completion Thresholds:

- (a) Fewer than 9 graduates/completions in 3 years for undergraduate programs
- (b) Fewer than 6 graduates/completions in 3 years for master's programs
- (c) Fewer than 3 graduates/completions in 3 years for doctoral programs

1.1.2. Enrollment Thresholds (pipeline):

- (a) Fewer than 15 registered in the last 5 years for undergraduate programs
- (b) Fewer than 10 registered in the last 5 years for master's programs
- (c) Fewer than 5 registered in the last 5 years for doctoral programs

1.2. Relevant Exceptions:

- 1.2.1. New programs are exempt for the first 3 years of implementation to allow growth.
- 1.2.2. Minors or certificates requiring only courses already taught for existing programs, referred to as Embedded Programs, may qualify for more flexibility from low-producing standards because they typically do not add to the costs of offering the

course(s), unless the major or other program are determined to be low-producing under the guidelines of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

2. EVALUATION TIMELINE

- 2.1. Annual reviews will be conducted utilizing a rolling 3-year average, including data from the most recent academic year, and the reporting of minors and certificates will be aligned with the biennial low-producing degree program reporting cycle.
- 2.2. Annual reviews will be conducted each February or March to coincide with the preparation and publication of the upcoming academic year's catalog. As part of this review:
 - (a) Programs identified to be in the "Monitor" category, as described in Section 3.4.2, must be reassessed to determine any changes in status.
 - (b) New low-producing programs will be identified based on updated enrollment and completion data.

3. PROCESS FOR REVIEW

- 3.1. Faculty Consultation: Colleges or departments housing the program must provide:
 - (a) Identification and explanation of whether the LPMC meets the exempt category criteria defined in Section 3.4.1 of this procedure.
 - (b) Justification for retention (e.g., future demand, public good, strategic importance).
 - (c) Data-driven evidence or strategic rationale for program continuation.
- 3.2. Independent Review: An advisory panel composed of representatives from each college will review justifications and provide recommendations to the provost or designated authority.
- 3.3. Final Determination: The final decision will rest with the provost, president, or other designated decision-maker.
- 3.4. Based on the LPMC review, programs will be classified into one of the following categories:
 - 3.4.1. **Exempt**: Programs exempt from review due to the following factors:
 - (a) Embedded Minors/Certificates: Programs relying solely on courses offered in existing majors that are determined to be low-producing under THECB guidelines.
 - (b) New Programs: Forgo review for the first 3 years.

- (c) Accreditation/Standards-Linked Programs: Programs linked to licensure, accreditation, or specific institutional missions that are not determined to be low-producing under THECB guidelines.

3.4.2. **Monitor:** Programs meeting demand but with low enrollment due to specific factors. Programs in this category must:

- (a) Provide a rationale for continuation, including projected growth or adjustments in offerings. (e.g., future demand, strategic importance).
- (b) Outline strategies for addressing low production (e.g., marketing, frequency of course offerings) for up to two years.

3.4.3. **Phase Out:** Programs determined to be no longer viable will:

- (a) Discontinue new enrollments.
- (b) Implement a teach-out plan for enrolled students.

3.4.4. **Suspend:** Programs with no currently enrolled students or programs with extremely low enrollment will be removed from the catalog.