



Date: April 13, 2015

To: Academic Deans (via email to deans and assistants list)

From: Jocelyn Milner, Director, Academic Planning and Institutional Research

Subject: Policy for Discontinuation of Obsolete Courses - Response requested by May 27, 2015

We are sending to you for review and endorsement policy and procedure guidelines to establish automatic course discontinuation for courses that have not been taught in eight (8) years with an allowable two (2) year extension by request. This policy is proposed as an approach to discontinuation of unused courses that will be more streamlined, routine, and less time-consuming for faculty and staff in academic departments, dean's offices, and support units.

In 2015-16, we are scheduled to conduct the every-five-year review of courses that have not been taught recently. This review provides an opportunity to remove obsolete courses from the course catalog and helps ensure that the courses students see listed as potentially available are truly courses that are included in the curricula of active degree/major programs. However, if we use the same process as in 2009-10, the project will require a substantial and onerous staff effort in the departments, school/college dean's office and curriculum committees, the University Curriculum Committee, APIR, and the Office of the Registrar. As an alternative, we are proposing this approach that gives attention to unused courses in an ongoing way rather than through a large, episodic project.

This version of the proposal was developed in collaboration with the Office of the Registrar and incorporates feedback collected from the University Committee on Assessment and Academic Affairs (associate deans), the University Curriculum Committee, Crossroads Committee (a campus committee of student and academic affairs professionals).

At this time we'd like to gather formal endorsements from school/college deans in preparation for consideration by the University Academic Planning Council. We invite you to review the policy with your school/college academic planning council if that is part of your school/college process. Responses by May 27, 2015, will allow for UAPC consideration at the June 2015 meeting and implementation in Fall 2015.

If you have questions or would like us to discuss this policy with you, please let me know ([jocelyn.milner@wisc.edu](mailto:jocelyn.milner@wisc.edu)). We look forward to your response.

Attachment – Draft Policy

Copies: Sarah Mangelsdorf, Provost  
Scott Owczarek, University Registrar  
Beth Warner, Associate Registrar  
Michelle Young, Academic Planner  
Eden Inoway-Ronnie, Provost's Chief of Staff



## **Obsolete Course Policy Proposal**

**Version 3.2**

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#### **Background and Rationale**

In 2009-2010, the University Academic Planning Council supported the obsolete course project, which was undertaken to remove courses from the full course catalog that had not been offered for an extended period of time. Courses that had not been taught for six or more years were identified and lists were sent to course subject owners for review and decisions about which courses should be deleted.

A total of 4185 courses were identified that had not been taught for six or more years; 3093 (74%) of the identified courses had not been taught for 10 or more years. Of the 4185 courses identified, 2435 (58%) were approved for deletion by the departments that owned the course subjects, and just 1941 (63%) of the courses that had not been taught for at least 10 years were deleted.

When this obsolete course project was completed a plan was put in place to repeat this review of obsolete courses every five years. There are several reasons to remove obsolete courses from the course catalog. It is a matter of truth in advertising so that the courses that are on the books are courses that students may expect to be taught on a regular basis. It helps advisors plan more effectively with students. And a streamlined courses array provides efficiencies in management of administrative workload.

Courses that have not been taught in eight or more years are unlikely to be integral parts of any curriculum. If a course that has not been taught in eight years were to be taught again it is very likely that an entirely new syllabus would need to be constructed and changes made to elements such as the course description, prerequisites etc. to bring the course up to date with current scholarship. These revisions would require careful consideration of the kind similar to proposing a new course.

29 The campus is due to repeat this exercise in 2015-16. The 2009-10 project was a collaborative  
30 effort of the Office of the Divisional Committees (which approved courses at the time),  
31 Academic Planning and Institutional Research, and the Office of the Registrar. It was a labor  
32 intensive, high-touch project that involved dozens of hours of time for numerous staff members  
33 in these campus-level offices and required a tremendous time commitment by the departments  
34 and school/college deans' offices to do the same.

35  
36 As we begin planning for the 2015-16 project we have identified a total of 2036 courses in 168  
37 course subject that have not been taught in the past eight years; 915 of those courses were on the  
38 list of courses five years ago and have not been offered during the intervening years. To repeat  
39 the process used five years ago will carry a substantial and distributed workload burden. We  
40 propose to replace the episodic review of the full list of courses with a policy that results in an  
41 on-going maintenance approach to removing courses that are not being taught in the past eight  
42 years and consequently are not part of any program curriculum.  
43

#### **Proposed Policy**

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45 To more efficiently conduct the review of obsolete courses we propose that a process for  
46 automatically discontinuing obsolete courses be put in place. The Office of Academic Planning  
47 and Institutional Research and the Office of the Registrar will collaborate to identify courses that  
48 have not been taught in eight or more years. Departments would be notified of courses in their  
49 subject listing that are on this list and scheduled to be deleted. Departments would be given an  
50 opportunity to request an extension of up to two years if they can:  
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- 52     • Provide a rationale for why the course has not been taught in the past but will be in the  
53       near future.
- 54     • Explain how the course that they propose to teach aligns with the current course as  
55       described.
- 56     • Provide a plan for including the course in their course array where it will be used  
57       regularly in a meaningful way.

58  
59 Notification will be sent to the chair of the department/academic unit that houses the subject  
60 listing and to the school or college curriculum coordinator. Departments would have  
61 approximately six months from notification that a course has been included on the list of courses  
62 to be discontinued to schedule the course, notify the RO that the course will be scheduled in the  
63 next year, or appeal for an extension. If the course is not scheduled or an extension is not  
64 granted, the course will be discontinued and then deleted from the course catalog by the Office  
65 of the Registrar.  
66

67  
68 In addition to courses that have not been offered, courses that were offered but had an enrollment  
69 of 0 over the course of the past eight years (fall, spring and summer terms included) will be also  
70 be identified. The A2 session (courses taken on a UW-Madison study abroad program) and  
71 transfer credit will be excluded as enrollment in these represent off-campus enrollment usually  
72 for course equivalency purposes.  
73

74 Independent study courses (numbered x99, x98, x89, 681, 682, 691, 692) and those created  
75 specifically for study abroad equivalencies (the SAB subject and those in other subjects that  
76 include the phrase “study abroad” in the title) will be excluded from this review.

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### 78 **Course Activity Maintenance Procedure**

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80 An annual review of course offering activity will be conducted by the Office of the Registrar  
81 (RO) and the Office of Academic Planning and Institutional Research. The procedural steps of  
82 this review will be as follows:

- 83
- 84 1. RO will produce a report identifying all courses that have not been taught in at least eight  
85 years.
  - 86 2. The identified courses will be placed on a printer-friendly web page which will be sorted  
88 by school/college and department.
  - 89 3. A memo will be sent to school/college curriculum coordinators and subject listing  
90 owners (department chairs and program directors), with encouragement to notify their  
91 curriculum committees, and informing them of the following:
    - 92 a. The UAPC approved policy to discontinue obsolete courses;
    - 93 b. That they have courses that are scheduled to be discontinued;
    - 94 c. The process to notify the RO that a course has been or will be scheduled;
    - 95 d. The process to appeal for an extension;
    - 96 e. The deadline by which response is required if they intend to offer the course in  
97 the next calendar year.
  - 98 4. If no response is received regarding the specified courses by the deadline, RO will  
99 discontinue the courses on the list and update the degree audit system accordingly.
  - 100 5. If a notification is received that a course will be offered within the next calendar year,  
101 RO will flag that course and track whether or not the course is indeed scheduled during  
102 that year. If it is not, the course will automatically be discontinued during the next  
103 annual review cycle; the department and school/college curriculum coordinators will be  
104 notified of the discontinuation.  
105

106 The review cycle will be initiated in April each year when the RO will generate and post the  
107 reports identifying course subject to discontinuation. The notification to department chairs and  
108 school/college curriculum coordinators will occur in early May. Parties will have until October  
109 15 to notify RO of specific courses intended to be offered in the next calendar year or complete  
110 the appeal process for an extension.

111 The appeal process will be handled using a workflow process similar to the course approval  
112 process. Subject owners may complete an appeal form requesting an extension of up to two  
113 years. The appeal must be approved by their school/college curriculum committee and the  
114 University Curriculum Committee. Requests for extensions must be initiated and completely  
115 approved within the six month review window. If the appeal is successful they have an additional  
116 two years to offer the course during which the course will be exempt from the annual obsolete

119 course review. If the course is not offered in this two year period it will automatically be  
120 discontinued.

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122

123 **Implementation Plan**

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125 If this policy is approved, it will be implemented in the month of April following UAPC  
126 approval. APIR and the RO will coordinate a communication and outreach plan and provide  
127 support to subject owners and school/colleges.

DRAFT