

# Courses and Subjects with Low Enrolments Policy

## Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) This Policy will increase the efficiency of La Trobe University's academic offerings by reducing the number of courses and subjects with low student enrolments. Reducing low enrolment courses/subjects will bring benefits to La Trobe in terms of academic staff time, administrative overheads and in the management of teaching facilities. The Policy will make explicit those courses and subjects with low enrolments that the University wishes to support due to their strategic value to La Trobe or their special significance to the communities the University serves. This document outlines the procedure for application of the exemption from closure of courses and subjects with low enrolments.

(2) This Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that the settings with respect to the threshold of 'low enrolment' and the definition of standard exemption categories remain appropriate.

(3) Where the University chooses to continue offering courses and subjects with low demand, it should do so purposefully, on the grounds of identified strategic or community benefit.

## Section 2 - Scope

(4) All undergraduate and postgraduate courses and all undergraduate and postgraduate subjects in all teaching periods, with the exception of:

- a. Non-award and short courses;
- b. Exchange and study abroad subjects;
- c. University level compulsory subjects that do not have a credit point value;
- d. Subjects delivered as a core component of the Hallmark Program; and
- e. Other courses and subjects provided with standard exemptions as outlined in the Procedure.

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

### Courses

(5) The owning School of each undergraduate and postgraduate course which is classified as a low enrolment course will be required to provide a cogent rationale for the continuation of this course beyond the current year.

### Subjects

(6) The owning School of each discrete undergraduate or postgraduate subject which is classified as a low enrolment subject will be required to close the subject in the following year unless an exemption is approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education).

## Exemptions

(7) Applications for a deferment of imminent closure of a course or subject that does not exceed the enrolments as defined below are made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education). Grounds for exemption are outlined in the procedure. Applications for exemption must have the written support of the owning Dean (for courses and subjects). Applications must include a commitment that the School (for courses and subjects) will financially support the course or subject for the duration of the exemption period.

(8) Standard exemptions apply to courses and subjects in certain categories as defined in the procedure. Courses and subjects offered through partnership arrangements with third parties will generally be subject to standard exemptions. The ongoing viability of these offerings will be reviewed regularly by the owning School with reference to the contract and business case governing the agreement.

## Section 4 - Procedures

### Establishing Qualifying Criteria

(9) In August/September of each year, the Course Portfolio and Scholarships Committee (CPSC) will consider the definition of 'low enrolment' for the purposes of closure and the categories of courses/subjects that should qualify for standard exemption for the following year. Changes to the Policy will be recommended to the Senior Executive Group (SEG) as required.

### Identifying Courses and Subjects

(10) Following the census date for each major teaching period, the Data and Performance Analytics (DAPA) will prepare reports of low enrolment courses and subjects, by School. The reports will identify the course/subject title and code, owning school of teaching, campus and the pattern of EFTSL or enrolments for the previous three years (for courses) or teaching periods (for subjects). Reports will identify those courses/subjects that meet the criteria for imminent closure, as well as those that fall into each of the categories of standard exemption. These reports will be provided to the Schools and to the Heads of regional campuses. Schools should consult regional Campus Heads on the impacts to regional delivery of potential course / subject closures as part of formulating their response to low enrolment reports.

### Applications for Exemption

(11) The Schools may respond to the reports and appeal in relation to any course or subject closure on three grounds.

(12) The first basis for appeal is that the course/subject has been incorrectly categorised and is not within the scope of this policy or qualifies in one of the standard exemption categories.

(13) The second basis for appeal is the strategic value of the course / subject to the University or the communities it serves. Exemptions under this basis may be granted at the discretion of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) for:

- a. Courses/subjects wholly or substantially funded by a third party;
- b. Courses offered at La Trobe that are unique to Victoria or Australia;
- c. Courses/subjects addressing a specific need within the regional communities served by the University campuses at which the course/subject is offered;
- d. Courses/subjects necessary to maintain a baseline of offerings in regional areas;
- e. Courses/subjects in areas of strategic or reputational importance for the University;
- f. Courses/subjects offered in a field with demonstrated high potential for future growth; and
- g. Subjects necessary for the University to achieve accreditation in a specific field.

(14) The third basis for appeal is that a postgraduate coursework course is delivered as part of a suite of concurrently delivered courses in the same discipline where:

- a. All courses in the suite are delivered in the same campus location; and
- b. Taken together, enrolment in all courses in the suite is above the relevant low enrolment threshold; and
- c. The delivery of the individual course/s below the relevant low enrolment threshold does not carry significant additional costs.

(15) Applications for exemption will be considered by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) at a meeting with relevant School representatives. Applications for exemption must have the written support of the owning Dean (for courses and subjects). Applications must include a commitment that the School(for courses and subjects) will financially support the course or subject for the duration of the exemption period. The length of the exemption period is at the discretion of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) and will typically be no longer than three years.

(16) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)'s decision will be final.

## Planning Course and Subject Offerings

(17) In considering the temporary suspension or permanent closure of courses or subjects, Schools will operate within the provisions of the:

- a. Course Lifecycle – Course Suspension and Closure Policy; and
- b. Subject Lifecycle – Subject Suspension and Closure Policy.

## Monitoring Compliance

(18) Data and Performance Analytics (DAPA) will prepare reports for information of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) and Course Portfolio and Scholarships Committee (CPSC) of the Senior Executive Group (SEG) to support monitoring and compliance.

(19) CPSC will provide a report of trends in courses and subjects with low enrolments to SEG in October annually.

## Timing

The following identifies the typical timing to be followed. Actual dates for the process will be set in September/October annually in the business schedule of the CP&SC for the coming year.	
September/October of the preceding year	The CPSC considers the definition of 'low enrolment' and the categories of courses/subjects requiring standard exemption and confirms actual process timelines and deadlines for the coming year.
October of the preceding year	The CPSC reports to SEG on trends in courses and subjects with low enrolments for the current year and recommends any required policy change for the next year.
Approx April (typically Semester 1 census date + 2 weeks)	DAPA circulates reports of previous year qualifying courses and current year for Semester 1 subjects to Schools.
April/May	Applications for exemption from closure are considered at a meeting with the DVC(E) and decisions made.
May	Formal notification of decisions circulated to Schools, DAPA and SEG for information.
Approx September (typically Semester 2 census date + 2 weeks)	DAPA circulates reports of Winter and Semester 2 subjects to Schools.

September/October	Applications for exemption from closure to be considered at a meeting with the DVC(E) and decisions made.
October	Formal notification of CPSC decisions circulated to Schools, DAPA and SEG for information.

## Section 5 - Definitions

(20) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

- a. A low enrolment undergraduate course is defined as a course of study that had fewer than 30 EFTSL in any location in the previous calendar year.
- b. A low enrolment postgraduate course is defined as a course of study that had fewer than 15 EFTSL in any location in the previous calendar year.
- c. A low enrolment undergraduate subject is defined as a subject with:
  - i. fewer than 30 enrolments in a teaching period if taught on the Melbourne (Bundoora) campus or if taught fully online;
  - ii. fewer than 20 enrolments in a teaching period if taught on the Bendigo campus;
  - iii. fewer than 15 enrolments in a teaching period if taught on the Albury-Wodonga, Mildura or Shepparton campuses
  - iv. fewer than 20 enrolments in a teaching period if taught as a distance education subject.
- d. A low enrolment postgraduate subject is defined as a subject with:
  - i. fewer than 20 enrolments in a teaching period if taught on the Melbourne (Bundoora) campus or if taught fully online;
  - ii. fewer than 15 enrolments in a teaching period if taught on the Bendigo campus;
  - iii. fewer than 15 enrolments in a teaching period if taught on the Albury-Wodonga, Mildura or Shepparton campuses;
  - iv. fewer than 15 enrolments in a teaching period if taught as a distance education subject.
- e. Multiple separately coded subject offerings will be treated as a single subject for the purposes of this policy where:
  - i. these are bundled as one instance in the academic timetable; or
  - ii. these are offered via blended mode at separate campuses using shared online resources.
- f. definitions of the standard exemption categories are as follows:
  - i. Courses: Standard Exemption Category
    - Pipelining: course stage = 'phasing out' or discontinued' or effective date = current year minus 1 and version = 1
    - Double degree course: Category Type Course Code = DDB, Double Degree Bachelors
    - Enabling course: Course Category Type = ENC
    - Honours course: Category Type Course Code = HONS, Bachelor Honours
    - Diploma course: Category Type Course Code = DIP, Diploma
    - Course offered at off-shore locations: Course location code = CH, FR, ML, O2, SI, VI (China, France, Malaysia, Other site 2, Singapore, Vietnam)
    - Course offered off-campus or online in partnership with a third party provider: courses which have been established at an off-campus location or online and are subject to a contractual agreement; Course liability category group code = PON

- Special exemption: On approval of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) or CPSC
- ii. Subjects: Standard Exemption Category
- Discontinued subject: subject stage = 'discontinued'
  - New subject in current year or current year minus 1: effective date = current year or current year minus 1 and version = 1
  - Co-taught: Co-taught subjects are those that are timetabled together in the academic timetable.
  - UG: Honours subject: grading Schema = LTU\_HONS or 'honours' or 'research' or 'thesis' in title and year level = 4
  - PG: Research subject: year level = 6 or year level = 5 and 'research' or 'thesis' in title
  - Work experience: Govt work experience indicator code = 1 or 2 and subjects included in the Workplace-based Subject list in Schedule A to the Academic Progress Monitoring and Intervention Procedures
  - Language subject: Chinese, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, AUSLAN, Latin, French, Hindi
  - Reading subject: 'Reading' in title; 'project' in title for FSTE
  - Subject offered off-campus, offshore or online in partnership with a third party provider: Unit liability category group code = POF, PON
  - Special exemption: On approval of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) or CPSC

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
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