

TOWSON UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES ON DOUBLE SECTIONS*

Towson University traditionally has had as its primary goal the provision of high quality education for all students. The University has placed major emphasis upon excellence in teaching as the most important determinant of quality education. It has been generally felt by both faculty and administration that excellence in instruction is aided considerably by a lower faculty-student ratio. Accordingly, classes of small to moderate size have predominated in the University.

However, for a variety of reasons—the special needs of students, the nature of the subject matter content being taught, and difficulties in scheduling, for example—double sections have been permitted in a few courses. While double section courses reduce the number of weekly lecture hours required of the instructor, the hours “saved” through this arrangement are to be used by the instructor to meet with small groups and individuals so that the personalization of instruction, which is traditional at Towson University, may be preserved.

Double sections—with their mix of lecture and discussion, of large group, small group, and individual interaction, and of formal and informal student-instructor contact—generally have been well received by students. If this instructional arrangement is to continue to be successful, however, it is important that its objective be accomplished and that students derive the benefits intended. In order to insure these outcomes, principles and guidelines for such courses have been developed.

Double Sections: For the purposes of these guidelines, double sections are classes for which a faculty member receives two instructional units in workload calculations.

Principles:

- Double sections should only be allowed when the faculty member or department proposing them can explain what specific benefit or contribution they will provide for students, the department, or the University that would not be present if the course was taught in single sections.
- If a double section would normally free some 45 hours of faculty classroom time during the semester that would otherwise be spent in a second offering of a single section course, proposals to offer double section courses should explain how that body of time will be applied by the faculty member in direct service to students or in the improvement of instruction in the course.
- Large lecture/lab classes: Many classes that have the lecture/lab format are taught with 2, 3, or even 4 lab sections meeting together for the “lecture,” or classroom portion of the course. The laboratory sections then meet separately and at different times, in groups ranging from 18 to 30, depending on the discipline and the physical number of spaces in the laboratory.

The award of two course units of workload credit for teaching a large multi-section lecture is very rare. This would have to be agreed upon by the Chair and Dean for an extraordinary reason. Naturally, the instructor would have to be solely responsible for the class (i.e., there is no assigned graduate teaching assistant or grader).

- The department Chair and Dean have the right to deny a request from a faculty member to teach one or more double sections in the same semester, or any other session.

Guidelines:

- Faculty wishing to offer a double section must submit a proposal outlining their plan for the course, the benefits provided, and the application of the time gained, as discussed above. The Chair and Dean review all proposals for approval/disapproval the first time a course is offered as a double section by a specific faculty member.
- Enrollment in a double section must be at least the total enrollment of two single sections for both lower and upper division courses. To ensure a full enrollment, students may add these courses until the end of the add/drop period.
- Faculty members intending to teach a double section of a course for the first time must submit a proposal for the double section, as described in this document. The proposal must be submitted to the department chair prior to or along with the faculty member's schedule for the semester in which the course will first be taught.
- The Department Chair and Dean of the College have the authority to decide whether or not a double section is appropriate for a specific course. The approval of both the Department Chair and College Dean is required for a double section proposal.
- Approved double sections should not be input as a combined section in the class schedule in PeopleSoft and should appear as a single section with increased enrollment. Double sections that are mistakenly created as combined sections will be fixed by the Registrar's Office prior to publishing the term's schedule.

***On March 27, 2012 this set of guidelines replaced the "Towson University Policy on Double Sections" approved by the Council of Deans on March 13, 1990. It was updated by the Deans' Council on May 20, 2003 and by the Provost's and Deans' Council on October 4, 2018.**

PROPOSAL TO OFFER A DOUBLE SECTION

Date: _____

Instructor: _____ **Department:** _____ **College:** _____

Course Title and Number: _____

- I. Benefits/contributions for students, dept, University that would not be present from teaching two single sections:**

- II. How will "saved" 45 contact hours be used in direct service to students or in the improvement of instruction in the course?**

- III. How will the stated department expectations of a double section in terms of number of graded assignments, examinations, papers, and other activities be met?**

Approvals:

Department Chair

Date

College Dean

Date