Linked Courses FAQs – Fall 2014

General FAQs

1. What are linked courses?
   - Linked courses at BGSU are a type of learning community in which a group of new freshmen is co-registered across (typically) 2 course sections, allowing them to take those courses as a cohort. This linking provides the opportunity to introduce academic as well as social coherence to the students’ educational experience.

2. Why is BGSU implementing linked courses?
   - The linked courses effort is part of BGSU’s continued focus on student success, providing opportunities to engage students with their peers and faculty as they transition into the university environment. There is evidence that linked courses can lead to improvements in grades, course completion, retention, and persistence. Many universities use some form of coordinated scheduling to engage new students in this type of learning community. Results from Fall 2013 semester showed that students enrolled in linked courses had a higher likelihood of being in good academic standing at the end of the semester than their peers who were not enrolled in linked courses. In addition, the retention rate from Fall 2013 to Spring 2014 semester was higher for students enrolled in linked courses.

3. Who picked the courses and sections to be included in links?
   - Courses used in links for the Fall 2013 semester served as the starting point for development of links for the Fall 2014 semester. This set of courses was refined based upon feedback from Chairs, Directors, Advisors, and Faculty in order to determine the set to be used in Fall 2014 links.

FAQs for Instructors

4. What are the 3000-series section numbers in courses associated with a link?
   - As the “section tracks” were developed, 3000-series sections (linked sections) complementary to the Regular 1000 and 2000-series sections (general availability sections) were established and seats for new freshmen were reserved in those linked sections, reducing the number of seats available in the corresponding general availability section by a corresponding number, so that between the two sections the overall enrollment cap is maintained. If there is a need to “shift” seats between complementary sections (e.g., to accommodate continuing students), the Office of Undergraduate Education and Registration & Records works with advisors and departments to determine the appropriate number of seats to “shift” and the manner in which they should be shifted (e.g., made available for a specific student, opened to accommodate wait-listed students, etc.).

5. I am teaching a linked course section. What is expected of me?
   - We encourage you to collaborate with the instructor(s) in course sections linked to yours as you determine to be appropriate. This could be simply sharing your syllabus with the other instructor(s) (e.g., so as to not schedule major exams or project due dates at the same times), or it could involve deeper, content-based linking, as this is a rich opportunity to engage students across several courses. Sessions to discuss collaboration opportunities will be held over the summer and links to resources in this regard are provided on the Linked Courses web site. You can also follow this link to directly get to a listing of those resources.
   - The Office of Undergraduate Education makes individualized “linkage” reports available that show, for each instructor’s linked course/section, the other course/sections involved in the link as well as the names of the instructors of those linked course/sections, if available.
6. What will I see in the MyBGSU Faculty Center for my linked course?
   o When viewed through the Faculty Center within the MyBGSU portal, the complementary linked and
general availability sections will be listed individually, each with its own roster. Grade rosters for these
sections will also be separate.

7. I am using Canvas to teach my linked course. What will I see in Canvas?
   o Canvas will have one course shell that applies to both the linked and general availability sections. It also
provides the capability to show all students enrolled in the course or section-specific enrollments. Follow this link for more information.

8. How will my linked course appear in successNET?
   o Each of the sections (linked and general availability) will appear as a separate entry in your list of
courses. Selecting either section will display only those students enrolled in that section – that is, there
is no consolidated view showing all of the students enrolled in the course.

9. Will my linked section be occupied entirely by students in a particular cohort?
   o In some cases, entire sections of a linked course will be occupied by students of the same major or
cohort – especially for majors involving a large number of incoming students. In other cases, such as
large lecture sections or courses in links for majors having a small number of incoming students, the
section may include students from several cohorts as well as continuing students.

10. Will instructors be told which students in their linked section(s) are part of a particular cohort?
    o The Office of Undergraduate Education is working to determine the feasibility of producing and making
available reports in that regard.

   FAQs for Advisors

11. How do students get enrolled in the linked course sections?
    o New freshmen will get enrolled in linked courses by advisors before the students arrive on campus for
their summer SOAR (Student Orientation, Advising & Registration) session. Enrolling a student in a link
results in the component course sections being added to the student’s schedule.
    o Students cannot enroll themselves in linked course sections.

12. Can Links be broken?
    o Links can be broken – that is, any linked course section in which a student has been enrolled can be
dropped from a student’s schedule without impacting the other course sections to which it was linked.
However because one of the intents of linked courses is to maintain cohorts of students across the
linked course sections, linkages should only be broken with good reason. Students do not have the
ability to drop courses out of the links on their own this summer.

13. How can Links be broken?
    o To break a link, drop the linked course section in question from the student’s schedule.
    o If a link must be broken, please use the advisor comments function of CSS to identify the reason for
breaking the link so that this information can be used to better inform future linked courses
implementations.
    o Consequence of breaking a link - If a link is broken, the section track used to enroll the student becomes
“out of balance” from the perspective of having the same number of seats available across all of the
sections in the track. Registration and Records and the Office of Undergraduate Education then work to
bring the track back into balance, if possible, so that there are no “orphan” seats.
To remove a student from an entire track, remove all of the linked sections that make up the track from the student’s schedule. If the removal of the last linked section would result in the student being enrolled in no classes, contact one of your college’s “super users” to remove that last section.

14. What is a “super user”?
   - A “super user” is an individual who has been granted a level of security in the PeopleSoft system that allows that person a broader range of capabilities than s/he would normally have in her/his role as an advisor. Among other activities, that person is able to drop the last class from a student’s schedule – frequently necessary in order to facilitate removal of a student from an entire track (see item 13 above). These individuals can also perform activities such as enrolling students into full sections and overriding course pre-requisites – not only within their own college but across colleges. As a result of the far-reaching capabilities associated with super user status, these capabilities should be used judiciously and only as necessary. Registration & Records and the Office of Undergraduate Education monitors the use of that status and will revoke super user access from individuals who abuse those privileges.

15. Will the system allow a student to be enrolled into a placement-based course’s (e.g., GSW) linked section if the student has not been placed?
   - As is the case with non-linked sections, placement criteria must be met for the student to be enrolled in such a course, unless overridden by an individual having the appropriate system security/authorization level.

16. Must a student’s major (academic plan) match the track into which s/he is pre-enrolled?
   - A student’s major (academic plan) does not have to match the track into which s/her is pre-enrolled. For the convenience of individuals doing the pre-enrollment, the system will initially show the tracks that have been developed for the student’s major but does not limit the tracks into which the student can be enrolled. Other tracks into which the student could be enrolled can be found by searching based upon academic plan, subplan, or “student group” (such as Honors).

17. What happens if a pre-enrolled student comes to SOAR and indicates s/he is changing majors? Will advisors be able to move the student into an appropriate linkage?
   - A SOAR advisor will be able to drop the student from the track associated with the old major and, if possible, enroll the student in a track associated with the new major. See the 4th bullet of FAQ “How can Links be broken” above for more information.

18. If all of the seats reserved for new freshmen in a linked section are not used in pre-enrollment, what happens to them?
   - “Leftover” seats in linked sections will be shifted into the complementary general availability sections as determinations are made that those seats are no longer needed for pre-enrollment. As the result of a system enhancement that allows departments to retain “ownership” of courses in links (but not the linked sections themselves), we hope that, with the collaboration of departments, those determinations can be made earlier in the SOAR season so as to reduce the instances of under-enrolled course sections at the start of the Fall semester.

19. Who can I contact with questions or for more information regarding linked courses?
   - Contact the following:
     - Rich Rowlands, Office of Undergraduate Education - (rdrowla@bgsu.edu) or 419-372-4869
     - Susan Kleine, Office of Undergraduate Education – (skleine@bgsu.edu) or 419-372-0398
     - Sue Houston, Provost’s Office – (shousto@bgsu.edu) or 419-372-5387