

Recommendations for Establishing and Modifying Course Enrollment Maximums: Principles, Roles, and Process

Introduction:

Learning occurs in many places on a college campus. It is understood that experience and individual attributes of the instructor and students affect learning strategies' efficiency and success. There is evidence that class size related to discipline, the scope of coursework, and students' preparation are important considerations in deciding the appropriate environment for learning.

The Santa Ana College Curriculum Council members recognize the importance of establishing class enrollment limits and in doing so must consider the curriculum focus, student success, equity, delivery system, mode, method, contractual agreements, types of coursework, industry or transfer requirements, laws and building codes, and administrative guidelines. The class enrollment maximums are recommendations for determining maximum student course enrollment numbers established for each class and may consider multiple variables as outlined below.

Definitions: Course enrollment maximums, preexisting or revised, are the maximums for student enrollment for a given course across all college sites.

Principles:

1. The discussion involved in determining or changing class enrollment maximums begins with the discipline faculty who will know best the pedagogical demands of the course and should be authorized to develop the starting point for the enrollment limit discussion.
2. The class enrollment maximum should not exceed the greatest number of students to whom the instructor can reasonably offer the attention necessary to effectively follow the Course Outline of Record (COR) as approved and meet Student Learning Outcome (SLO) benchmarks.
3. Class enrollment maximums should be determined based on the method of presentation used in the class (lecture, lab, and other discipline specific needs and guidelines); course modality (remote, hybrid, in-person, remote live), objective, and outcomes; assessment methods and processes as established on the COR (take-home writing assignments, essay exams, presentations, etc.).
4. Course enrollment maximums are published in the COR for faculty to reference and monitor. Any class enrollment maximum temporarily modified to address increased

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enrollment or an unforeseen circumstance, will revert to original COR listed CAP upon the completion of the semester.

5. Class enrollment maximums should be supported by current and reliable data, both locally produced and statewide. This can also include course enrollment, retention, completion and success data.
6. While pedagogical factors and student success should be the basis for establishing the class enrollment maximum, safety and compliance with legal codes must always be ensured. However, available facilities may not be used as reasoning for increased class enrollment.
7. Due to facilities limitations, lower enrollment may be used for that course section without modifying the course enrollment maximum that is listed on the COR for a given course across all campus sites and modalities.
8. Evaluation of changes to course enrollment maximums will be included in the annual and capstone program review reports as well as the COR review through the curriculum process.
9. Any changes to the course enrollment maximum must be achieved through consensus between discipline faculty and administrators.

Process:

Establishing New Course Enrollment Maximums:

For new courses, course proposals are initiated by the discipline or department in which courses will be taught. Proposals should include a suggestion for an enrollment maximum based on local research, recommendations from external bodies, or other data. The discipline faculty will know best the pedagogical demands of the course and should be authorized to develop the starting point for the enrollment limit discussion.

The discipline faculty must follow CIC's process of developing and submitting the proposed enrollment maximum including: all necessary forms, required data and documentation, timelines for submission, and further steps through which the proposal must pass after development by the discipline faculty but before final approval, including administrative review, and if necessary, collaboration with the bargaining unit.

Establishing new Course Enrollment Maximums must include collaborative discussion with the area administrator (Dean) prior to being submitted to the Curriculum and Instruction Council which will make the final decisions regarding the proposed change to the course. Any concerns from the area administrator (Dean) can be included in the Petition for Establishing/Amending Class Enrollment Maximum.

Revising Existing Course Caps:

Discipline-specific faculty members have the authority to submit a course revision to the Curriculum and Instruction Council to modify an existing course enrollment maximum based on the criteria outlined below with the consent of their fellow division faculty and with appropriate documentation. (This may be a non-substantial update of COR and a complete review of course will not be required.)

Revisions must meet at least one criterion on the Class Enrollment Maximum Revision Form, but two or more are recommended for justification of a Course Enrollment Maximum modification proposal. The discipline faculty must follow CIC's process of developing and submitting the proposed enrollment maximum including: all necessary forms, required data and documentation, timelines for submission, and further steps through which the proposal must pass after development by the discipline faculty but before final approval, including administrative review, and if necessary, collaboration with the bargaining unit.

Proposals to change an existing course enrollment maximum must include collaborative discussion with the area administrator (Dean) prior to being submitted to the Curriculum and Instruction Council which will make the final decisions regarding the proposed change to the course. Any concerns from the area administrator (Dean) can be included in the Petition for Establishing/Amending Class Enrollment Maximum

Criteria for the Modification of Class Size:

Modifications to a class enrollment maximum must be justified with one of the below criteria; it is recommended that two or more criteria be considered in a proposal. Additionally, proposals of new courses should establish the class size based on one or more of the below criteria:

1. Health and Safety
 - a. Fire codes
 - b. Discipline and industry regulations
 - c. Ability of faculty to effectively supervise students (especially in lab related courses)
 - d. Ability of faculty to teach, monitor, and correct student skill levels that could impact the health and safety of students and faculty (especially in CE, lab and performance related courses)
 - e. Ability of faculty to effectively serve students in the event of an accident as a result of student performance
2. Mandate or Regulation
 - a. Ability to comply with specific accreditation or relevant external requirements and standards

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3. Pedagogy as outlined in the approved COR faculty have the
 - a. Ability to effectively follow the COR as approved
 - b. Ability to maintain appropriate rigor of course requirements
 - c. Ability to effectively assess summative and formative level outcomes
 - d. Ability to effectively determine the originality or authenticity of student work
 - e. Ability to maintain effective interaction with students
 - f. Ability to work with individual students
 - g. Ability to monitor the collaborative work of student groups
 - h. Ability to properly address the various skill levels of students
4. Course Modality
 - a. Online, hybrid, face to face or remote-live
5. Instructional Delivery
 - a. Lab courses, combined lecture, or lecture only
 - b. Courses with built-in support
6. Student Assessment
 - a. Types and/or amount of individual assignments, projects, and/or papers to assess
 - b. Methods of student assessment, feedback, or evaluation
 - c. Course-level or program-level Student Learning Outcomes
 - d. Course objectives in the COR
7. Use of Existing Class Size for a similar course within the discipline
 - a. For new courses only; cannot be used as one of the required criteria for modifying an existing course cap
 - b. New course should be comparable (i.e. objectives, topics and scope, assignment, assessment, and pedagogy) to other course(s) in the discipline
8. Facility or Other Class Capacity Limitations
 - a. Availability of seats, desks, or workstations
 - b. Availability of equipment or supplies
 - c. Availability of required or necessary teaching or lab assistants

Roles:

Course enrollment maximum should be understood and respected by faculty, administration, staff, the Curriculum and Instructional Council, bargaining unit, and other interested parties.

Recommendations for Faculty:

The discussion involved in determining or changing class enrollment maximums should begin at the level of discipline faculty who will know best the pedagogical demands of the course and should be authorized to develop the starting point for the enrollment limit discussion.

Recommendations for Administrators:

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Administration should work within the process for establishing course enrollment maximums to ensure enrollment success and the fiscal viability of all courses while still ensuring that academic quality is not diminished.

Recommendations for CIC:

The Curriculum and Instruction Council should carefully review all course proposals from discipline faculty to ensure that all appropriate factors have been included in making the decision and that all relevant data have been considered and documented.

CIC will review the process, procedures and documentation at least every two (2) years and make recommendations for updates.

Recommendations for Bargaining Unit:

Contract language should both protect faculty rights and instructional quality regarding enrollment maximums and ensure that faculty act responsibly in observing those limits.

References

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