

# Asynchronous Distance Education Class Size Proposal

## History

In October 2017, the Distance Education Committee proposed to the Faculty Senate a recommendation to cap asynchronous distance education class size at 25 students based on pedagogical research. Research recommends a cap closer to 15 but the DE Committee wanted to find a middle ground between current practice, where online class size could range between 30 and 45, and what was pedagogically sound for effective online teaching. [Faculty Senate endorsed the following recommendation:](#)

Oct 2017: “Online class cap of 25, with flexibility on this number to be determined by faculty in departments. The DE Committee also recommends that each online section of the same course have the same class size. “

At the time of the original proposal, all online classes were taught asynchronously.

## Reinvigoration of this Effort

Now that we have close to 100% of our courses in a fully online format, more faculty are becoming aware of something distance education faculty have known for some time – asynchronous online learning takes significantly more time to facilitate.

To differentiate asynchronous online learning from correspondence courses, there must be weekly, scheduled, or predictable outreach from instructor to student and weekly interaction among students. Tracking, facilitating, and providing meaningful and substantive feedback takes significant time. An in-person (or synchronous online) class provides opportunities during the class session for student-to-student interaction, and instructor-to-student feedback. In a synchronous online class, this is possible but requires the creation of breakout rooms and subsequent documentation to establish evidence of such contact. It is also easier for a student in a synchronous online class to ‘hide out in the back row’ or even leave the classroom without the instructor noticing. Asynchronous classes require even more time to create effective ways for students to engage with one another, to facilitate this engagement, to monitor participation, and to motivate those who may not be participating.

Because of this increased awareness of what it takes to effectively teach online, the DE Committee would like to revive the proposal.

## Proposal

The Distance Education Committee would like the Faculty Senate to reaffirm their commitment to and support of an asynchronous online class cap of 25, with flexibility on this number to be determined by faculty in departments. The DE Committee also recommends that each fully online asynchronous section of the same course have the same class size.

(Proposal amended following initial presentation to Faculty Senate on November 18, 2020.)