

Student-Instructor Ratio Guidelines

for online courses Online courses that include the typical characteristics noted above and are taught by an online instructor, offered in a semester

synchronous online and dual mode courses require attention to logistical considerations for live teaching sessions. The primary facilitation concerns for these formats are the cognitive load for the instructor and the time to prepare and facilitate the sessions (Benshoff & Gibbons, 2011; Mallon et al., 2023, Raes et al., 2020).

The [Criteria Matrix for Approving Synchronous Online and Dual Mode Courses](#) (which Deans use to determine whether these formats are appropriate for a given context) indicates a general target of no more than 2025 students enrolled in a synchronous online or dual mode course. This target class size is based on recommendations from SLU faculty with experience teaching in these formats prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the literature for online asynchronous courses, and the emerging literature specific to these distance course formats.

The emerging literature on effective class size for synchronous online and dual mode formats is currently limited and equivocal. For synchronous online sessions, literature suggests limiting class size to 15 or fewer students or, in the least, smaller groups than the typical in-person class enrollment for maximum pedagogical value (de Salamanca, 2018, Mallon et al., 2023, McDaniels et al., 2016). Dual mode courses, which combine in-person and online sections, have a recommended class size of 15 or fewer students. The recommended class size for both in-person sections and online sections combined ranges from ten to eighteen (Parker White et al., 2010). Although SLU faculty who have taught in these formats recommended slightly higher ranges for both synchronous online and dual-mode formats, class sizes also depend on classroom technologies and the number of instructional roles (e.g., TAs or emmentors) assigned to a course (Parker White et al., 2010).

In general, synchronous online and dual mode courses should have relatively small numbers of students participating remotely, to allow instructors the ability to see all students on a computer screen at the same time and to facilitate rich discussions and other course activities in ways that are equitable for all students enrolled in the course. As the literature settles regarding courses offered in these formats, these Guidelines will be updated.

References

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