

Suggested Strategies for Larger Classes

As a faculty, we remain committed to the idea that a close-knit community of learning and debate is critical to the Rice experience and that the delivery of academic material is often best served through live in-person traditional faculty/student interaction. It is expected that Rice will continue to follow CDC guidance on in-person gatherings, which is currently limited to no more than 50 people, including the instructor and in many cases a technology assistant. Thus, we believe that it is impractical for classes of more than 100 students to have a significant in-person option. Consequently, it is expected that classes with more than 100 students should be delivered online-only this Fall. Policy 846 requires that faculty teaching an online-only course complete the training modules provided by Rice Online. Registration can be made using the link <https://catalog.rice.edu/browse/online/courses/fall-2020-dual-delivery-training>.

Although classes with student enrollments in the range of 50-100 may more easily include a significant in-person experience, adjusting large sections poses a particularly difficult scheduling challenge. Therefore, classes in the range of 50-100 people (including instructors) should also be delivered online-only by default. However, exceptions to the online-only option are welcome if an instructor is interested and has consulted with their department chair. If the chair approves, they will formally make a request of the Provost who will work with the Registrar to ensure the classroom space is available. Requests to deliver some in-person class experience for classes of 50-100 students should be made by June 30, 2020. The Office of the Registrar has compiled a list of all Fall 2020 courses, including those with projected enrollments >50, and will forward these to the departments to assist in preparation for course delivery. We encourage faculty to develop creative ways to maintain the essence of the Rice experience, to the extent that such delivery is consistent with protecting the health and safety of our community. Faculty may consider a range of options that could have a limited impact on workload and perhaps a negligible impact on learning outcomes. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- Fully online class but with live (in-person or synchronous zoom session if the instructor cannot be on site) office hours or smaller required live group discussion/study sessions during scheduled class time (with attendance capped <50). These could also be recorded. Such course delivery would be analogous to the familiar “flipped” classroom.
- Instructors could deliver the class remotely to students assembled in the classroom (movie-theatre style, projected onto a central screen, for example). Other later sections could watch a re-broadcast of the earlier lectures. An advantage to this is that while recording, the instructor (or a technology assistant) can stop and start the broadcast stream to answer questions in real time. This option might be valuable for faculty that are unable to be on campus for health reasons.
- Delivering the course in-person, but with online viewing. Some students (<50) would attend regular classes that conform to social distancing guidelines. Attendance could be rotated, optional, etc., such as noted in the following example.

- Alternating groups of students that attend remotely or in-person. For example, an 80-person Tuesday/Thursday class (including the instructors) might have half the section attend Tuesdays or Thursday while the other half participates remotely (live or recorded), or consumes other pre-recorded content on days they don't attend.
- Large course offerings could be broken into smaller sections (<50 total attendees). Lectures could be delivered multiple times by the same or different instructors or TAs, depending on room availability, schedule flexibility, and faculty willingness.

Please note that Rice's standard time blocks and in-person meeting patterns have been expanded, including the introduction of meeting patterns earlier in the day, mid-day*, and evenings to the extent these are feasible in order to fully utilize our classroom spaces while maintaining social distancing. (*Food & Housing will be expanding the hours for lunch allowing students to "schedule" their lunch time around mid-day course offerings.)

Of course, these blended dual-delivery options are available to all classes for which the instructor cannot physically be present to deliver in-person instruction, not just those between 50-100 persons and are included here simply as examples. Similarly, in those instances the instructors should consult with their department chair, who will formally advise the Registrar. To the extent that in-person experiences remain a central component of instruction and learning, it is important to note that these should not be required if it is impractical or unsafe. Also, it is inevitable that some students and/or instructors may be unable to attend in-person, may be quarantined during the semester, living in distant time-zones, or have idiosyncratic time constraints. Any or all of these options could be used in flexible ways that change over the semester.