

Know Your Contract

What Is Class Size and How Was It Established?

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First a review of relevant terms in *Article 9*:

- "Load" is defined as "class size, load factor, number of preparations per quarter, number of classes per year, and other such assignments as they pertain to hours of employment."
- "Class size" refers officially to the number of students actually attending a class the first meeting (including students who have made a legitimate, written request to begin attending on the second meeting). Informally, the term is used as the number of students attending/enrolled at any particular time in a quarter/summer session.
- "Minimum class size" is the smallest number of students actually attending (usually 20) that will allow a class to continue for the length of the term; a class enrollment below this number is subject to cancellation.
- "Maximum class size" is the largest number of students the Board may enroll in a class as stipulated by the Official Course Outline. Faculty may exceed this number by choosing to add students after the class begins (or for distance learning classes, during the registration period in accordance with the MOU on Distance Learning (dated March 24, 2008 and contained in the *Agreement*).

Note that "seat count" is not an official or approved term anywhere in the *Agreement* and its use as an informal synonym for "maximum class size" leads to confusion. Depending on the context, "seat count" can also refer to the number of seats in a classroom (chair count) or the number of students sitting in classroom seats (more properly, class size).

In 2014, the Load Task Force, a joint effort of FA and the District, negotiated a series of Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) to establish and implement consistent load factors and class sizes. These MOUs can be found on this website under the Agreement tab.

Another oft-asked question is can the maximum class size and/or load factor be changed? The answer is "yes," but the process is somewhat opaque. If curriculum changes demand—for example, the development of new technologies or pedagogical techniques, or the needs of new student populations—adjustments in load can be negotiated at the table or through a division process: "*no policy, procedure or practice pertaining to load shall prohibit changes in load within a division as long as the changes are required by curriculum adjustments that have been approved by the faculty of the division and the appropriate college curriculum committee*" (*Article 9.6*).

Faculty and managers in some areas have the erroneous idea that maximum class size is arbitrary and open to individual negotiation, a proscribed practice known as "direct dealing". In a few cases, faculty have seen their maximum class size vary from 50-100% without explanation, especially when the course is coded the dreaded "999" in the scheduling office, meaning that students can be enrolled until the administrator opens up another section. Faculty with this experience should bring their complaints directly to FA.