

March 1, 2022

Dear Colleagues:

Over the course of the pandemic, RIT faculty and students had extensive experience with online instruction. As we move back towards a more typical learning environment, it's important to apply the lessons learned to enhance instruction and instructional options. One application is the balance of in-person and online courses available to undergraduates. I'm writing to share with you that effective fall 2022, colleges will have the latitude to schedule 15% of their undergraduate courses online. Raising this ceiling beyond historic levels is intended to help colleges respond to evolutions in faculty and student views of optimal course modalities.

This decision substantially increases the historic availability of undergraduate online courses. Analysis of recent RIT pulse survey responses showed that while students and faculty strongly preferred in-person instruction, they also expressed the desire for online options. Student wait lists also suggest there is a demand for online sections. Many faculty have found online instruction can improve student engagement and makes possible innovative instruction techniques not available in traditional classrooms. All these factors support what I have heard from many of you – that there can be value in offering a larger number of online courses than we historically did prior to the pandemic. Of course, colleges are not required to put 15% of sections online – this is up to the individual college administration and its faculty.

If you incorporate online sections into the fall and spring 2022-2023 academic schedule, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- For any given course, students should be able to choose between in-person and online sections. Only in exceptional circumstances and with dean approval should an online section be the sole option.
- The majority of undergraduate online courses should use synchronous delivery. Use of asynchronous delivery modes should be justified, such as support for co-op students who need flexibility in course meetings times.
- Faculty need to be consulted about the courses most appropriate for online instruction. Decisions about which courses to offer online should be guided primarily by department head and faculty judgment of pedagogical factors including:
 - Online delivery is clearly an advantageous pedagogical approach.
 - Past evidence suggests online delivery contributed to higher student success and student satisfaction.
 - Faculty are prepared to teach online and will ideally have participated in development programs for best practices in online teaching and learning.

- Emphasis should continue to be given to ensuring that first- and second-year students have a fully in-person schedules.
- Section sizes for online sections should generally follow best practices of no more than 35. In circumstances where larger sections are scheduled, the total number of sections should be reduced such that no more than 15% of students are learning online.
- Departments scheduling online courses should continue to assess, to the degree possible, learning outcomes and student success between online and face-to-face versions of the same course.

Summer term is not subject to these limits. Departments are encouraged to offer higher numbers of online courses in the summer and no cap will apply.

The pandemic has taught us many lessons and, as in any difficult time, a few good things resulted. One of those is the renewed and reinvigorated conversations on our campus about pedagogy, student learning, and innovation. Today we have capabilities for online instruction that we never thought about two years ago. I hope we will continue to build on this expertise as we continually strengthen and develop the curriculum and pedagogy at RIT.

If you have questions or need additional guidance, please talk with your dean, your associate dean, or reach out to Vice Provost Christine Licata.

Best wishes,

Ellen Granberg, Ph.D.
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs