FAQ: Full-Time Equivalent Student (FTES)

**WHAT’S A FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT STUDENT (FTES)?**

Full-Time Equivalent Students, or FTES, is the main source of funding for the California Community Colleges. It is based on a formula that measures full-time students and part-time students converted to full-time students for funding purposes as illustrated below.

- An FTES represents 525 Total Student Contact Hours (TSCH)
- 1 student taking five traditional three unit classes, or 15 units per semester for 2 semesters of 17.5 weeks each (15 x 2 x 17.5 = 525)
- FTES are counted at Census date which is about 20% after the start of the semester, except for positive attendance courses which count actual hours attended

**WHAT IS THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS EACH CLASS SECTION SHOULD HAVE?**

The best practice is, on average, 35 students per every average 3-unit class section. For example,

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\frac{35 \text{ students} \times 3 \text{ units} \times 17.5 \text{ weeks per semester}}{1 \text{ FTES (or 525 Student Contact Hours)}} = \frac{35 \times 3 \times 17.50}{525} = 3.50 \text{ FTES per class section}
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This is what is referred to as 100 percent productivity or workload efficiency and it means that a college is maximizing the state revenue for each average section offered.

**DO ALL OUR CLASS SECTIONS HAVE 35 STUDENTS?**

No. Many factors go into determining the number of students in each class section, including classroom size, the CTA agreement, special circumstances (e.g. courses required for graduation. courses required in a major, courses required in career subject area, frequency of course offering, maximum enrollments permitted by professional accreditation body), etc. The best practice of 100% efficiency is an average of ALL course sections.