DigiGuide: Considerations for a HyFlex Teaching Approach

At this time the University Covid-Education group has agreed that this synchronous mixed-mode of teaching is NOT one that we would recommend at the moment for the following reasons:

1. The emphasis for 2021/22 is, as far as reasonably possible, to encourage students back on to campus for in person face to face teaching and that hyflex provision may deter some students from coming back on to campus, even when the on campus experience is likely to be better.
2. That unless the whole programme team are committed to the hyflex model it may put pressure, from students, on other colleagues who teach on the programme to also offer this mode of teaching, and from our own experience and others' in the sector it is a very challenging and inefficient teaching mode for many colleagues.
3. We do not have the ideal technical infrastructure (in particular visual/audio equipment) in place to provide the very best experience for students remotely accessing the session alongside face-to-face students.
4. It is likely to detract from the on campus face-to-face student learning experience at a time when we need to ensure the student experience coming back on to campus is at its very best.

You can read about our own experience of [trying out hybrid teaching on campus](#) during the pandemic.

However, we are aware that colleagues are interested in exploring the potential for hyflex as a potential model for teaching in the future. If this applies to you then we suggest that this might usefully be undertaken as a project approved by your Head of Department. This could involve the wider programme team in partnership with Computing Services Department and Estates to ensure that it is properly supported and has the very best chance of success which Centre for Innovation in Education would also be able to contribute to.

Please feel free to contact your APVCE or us at cie@liverpool.ac.uk if you have any further comments or queries.

An Overview of Hyflex

"The hybrid flexible, or HyFlex, course format is an instructional approach that combines face-to-face (F2F) and online learning. Each class session and learning activity is offered in-person, synchronously online, and asynchronously online. Students can decide—for each class or activity—how to participate." (© 2020 EDUCAUSE)

HyFlex teaching places flexibility at its core, meaning that students who have other commitments, such as employment or family responsibilities, can still maintain an asynchronous pathway where synchronous participation is not possible. However, it is important to note that a HyFlex approach may not be the most appropriate for disciplines which require synchronous participation or physical components such as lab work, use of machinery and/or specialist equipment or health care related disciplines.

Although challenging to implement, a HyFlex approach could be beneficial to you and your students because:
- It combines face-to-face and online modes of learning.
- It offers students the flexibility of attending in-person or online.
- It enables different methods of interaction and engagement.

Similarly, a Hyflex approach can often be a challenging experience for teachers, because:
- It can be challenging to meet students' needs over two teaching modes.
- It can be difficult to facilitate student interaction.
- It can be a challenge to manage several tools and platforms to achieve active learning in a synchronous online environment.
- Both groups of students (face-to-face and online) can feel frustrated in a teaching mode when they feel that their needs are not being prioritised. Often, the teacher doesn't know whether to focus on the online or face-to-face participants and sometimes neglect the needs of one mode.

Be prepared: checklist for a successful HyFlex approach

The checklist below may be used as a guide to help you successfully prepare for a HyFlex approach. It is intended to act as a reminder of certain considerations which are often overlooked.

	Yes	No
Planning for Class		
Have you asked students who will attend in-person or online?		
Have you visited the room you will be using to familiarise yourself with the facilities and environment?		
Have you considered a seating plan, based on current social distancing guidance?		
Have you created a channel of communication for students in case they encounter issues during the session?		
Have you made a record of CSD contact details in the event of technical difficulties?		

Preparation and Testing		
Have you tested the equipment and set-up of the teaching space you will be using?		
Have you specifically tested; microphone, web camera positioning, audio clarity etc. with students in class?		
Have you communicated with students regarding any technical requirements for attending online, or indeed face-to-face? i.e., any software which may need to be installed.		
Have you arranged for any on-site (face-to-face) technical assistance, or online support if required?		
Teaching Content and Activities		
Have you considered the pedagogical approach that you will take to engage both in-person and online students?		
Have you considered asking for student assistance in monitoring the chat forums? Consider asking your students how they would like to be supported – let them share their ideas.		
Have you thought about how both in-person and online students can engage in; discussion, group work, role-play, and reporting back to the wider group?		
Have you considered the digital tools and platforms available to support you in your pedagogical approach and learning activities?		
Are you comfortable in using the tools that are required for your chosen approach? If not, seek further support and guidance.		
Have you uploaded your materials to Canvas or VITAL and made these available to students before class? Try to do this well in advance of the scheduled session.		
Support and Considerations		
Have you considered students who may require alternative formats of learning materials, accessibility issues or have specific needs? For example, it is good practice for teachers to read out specific comments from chat forums, so that students can hear it verbalised during a discussion.		
Have you considered recording your session to enable students to view the session again in their own time, or indeed to enable you to reflect on how the session went?		

Additional CIE Resources

- **Synchronous Online Seminars: Student Experience and Engagement Considerations**
- **Online Synchronous Teaching**
- **Webinars: Webcams off or on?**

References

'7 things you should know about the HyFlex course model'. EDUCAUSE LEARNING INITIATIVE educause.edu/ELI E. © 2020 EDUCAUSE. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 4.0 International License

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Raes, A., Detienne, L., Windey, I. & Depaepe, F. (2020). A systematic literature review on synchronous hybrid learning: gaps identified. Learning Environ Res, 23, 269–290.

[What Is a Hybrid Learning Model?](#) – excellent article with tips for implementing hybrid learning and a discussion around the future of the approach in higher education