Faculty Guide to Selecting Courses for Blended or Fully Online Delivery

At York, fully online delivery is defined as at least 80% of the course delivered online, usually the remaining 20% allows for on campus assessment of student learning. Blended learning is defined as at least 30% of the course delivered face to face, 30% online and the remaining 40% either online or face to face.

There is no magic formula for identifying which courses or programs should incorporate blended or fully online learning. Thoughtful and appropriate use of technology has been shown to benefit student learning, and can also improve the instructor’s experience. In determining which courses to prioritize for blended learning, consider the following:

What is the current situation?

In your faculty, which courses are already offered fully online, and which are blended? Who are the instructors who are already delivering courses fully online or blended? Is there interest among those already using blended or fully online delivery to convert/create more courses? Building on what already exists, or filling gaps, may be good starting points.

Is flexibility a desirable feature of the program overall? Consider the program as a whole— is it possible for those who wish to select a range of courses that are delivered fully online or blended? For example, commuter students to reduce their trips on campus, and particularly required courses or those only offered once a year.

Are the students prepared to be online? There are no hard and fast rules, but you may find 2000 and 3000 level courses are better suited to fully online delivery, as first year and fourth year students in particular often need to build face to face relationships with their instructor; first years as they transition into York and fourth years as they require references. Blended delivery allows for both face to face and online elements and can be suitable for any year of study with appropriate preparation.

What will the students do? If the course has a heavy emphasis on practical skills that require a lot of face to face work, or use of class equipment, these courses may be better suited to be adapted to blended courses rather than fully online delivery.

When is the course currently offered? Students who choose to attend courses in the evenings and in the summer tend to be most interested in eLearning opportunities, both fully online and blended. This is not true of all students, but is a trend. Therefore if you already have demand for a course at these times, consider converting them to blended or fully online.

New or existing course? The process of course design is similar for both new and existing courses. Whether you are creating a new eLearning course from scratch or adapting an existing course, both require significant effort and time.

What is the faculty experience of creating and delivering eLearning courses?
It takes certain skills and experience from the instructors to design and deliver a successful blended/fully online course. Consider the potential professional development needs and what support is available in your faculty and centrally.

**How much time is available?** With eLearning, most instructors should have a very clear plan for the whole course and develop a significant part of their materials before the course starts. There is less opportunity to make amendments ‘on the hoof’, as the materials are usually posted ahead of time on Moodle. We recommend that instructors attend the eLearning at York course offered by the Teaching Commons in the semester before the course is due to be offered, to provide sufficient time to consider options and to create online materials without excessive stress of trying to meet unrealistic deadlines.

**Are students motivated?** Research suggests students who are more highly motivated to complete a course will perform better than those who aren’t. This is true regardless of delivery mode. However with fully online and to a lesser extent blended courses, instructors need to pay special attention to how to engage students. This may be a determining factor when deciding which courses to convert first – those with high completion averages or required courses may be better suited than those with poor completion. However, it may be possible to address the reasons for low completion through appropriate use of technology.

**Cyclical Program Review.** Consider programs currently under review, are there elements of the program that a change of delivery mode may help to address? Use this opportunity to revamp the course offering.

**Further considerations**
In addition to the practical factors mentioned above, further consideration is needed as to when to use a blended or fully online format. The key is to identify the desired learning outcomes, then the technology and format that is most likely to result in effective learning. Whether blended or fully online, there are advantages in using technology including accessibility of material, use of videos or audio clips to enhance the learning experience, social media to encourage group discussion, illustrations and simulations. Students can be asked to create and contribute electronic resources as well, developing new skills.

**Advantages of Blended Delivery:**
Instructors can use online tools to present material to students for them to view or engage with in their own time, leaving face to face time for further explanations, group work or discussions.

**Advantages of Online Delivery:**
In addition to the advantages suggested for blended delivery, fully online courses provide extra flexibility as students do not need to come onto campus, or do so as a minimum just to complete the end of course assignments.
The instructor can deliver the course from anywhere that has internet access. There is no need to book a classroom. Class size is restricted by the ability to work with students, not by the physical class size or location limitations.

Please refer to the Teaching Commons website for further advice and evidence of the advantages of either form of delivery - http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/elearning/.

**General Considerations**

Ensure that any online materials are AODA compliant, to ensure access is possible by all students.

Where appropriate ensure suitable student support is in place, and that the technology used is accessible in terms of cost as well as approach. For example it is not acceptable to assume all students have access to an iPad or a mobile phone, even if the evidence suggests that is the case.

Avoid using this as an opportunity to add more work and resources to a course – students have on average 100 hours for each 3 credit course – those 100 hours include all course readings, activities and assessments. Sometimes when courses use blended or online delivery the hours of work required by students expands beyond that expected in a face to face equivalent. This should be avoided. If you want to provide supplementary reading or resources for students interested in taking their studies further, make it clear which elements are mandatory and which are for further reference only.