

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HYBRID COURSES

## PREPPING FOR THE COURSE: SCHEDULING, CLASSROOMS, AND TECHNOLOGY

### CAN I USE ANY CLASSROOM FOR A HYBRID COURSE, OR IS THERE A TYPE OF CLASSROOM THAT WORKS BEST?

Active learning classrooms are best for hybrid classes because of the collaborative and cooperative nature of the synchronous work that your students will be doing. Any room with movable desks will be preferable to stadium/lecture seating or a computer lab.

### HOW MANY DAYS BEFORE THE SYNCHRONOUS SESSION SHOULD I HAVE THE ASYNCHRONOUS WORK DUE?

Assigning deadlines for asynchronous work depends on the day that your synchronous session is scheduled. As you design your course, consider the types of work that you will be asking students to do asynchronously and how long you would like them to sit with that work before joining the synchronous class that week.

The general principle to keep in mind when scheduling weekly work is that you don't want students to forget any of the material. Give them enough deadlines so that they don't lose the thread of the work that you're doing in class. The Structuring a Week of a Hybrid Course infographic on the Hybrid Teaching and Learning website shows different scheduling options.

If you assign different types of work, assigning different due dates for each type will help you spread the work out over the week, but it's important to keep the deadlines steady and the type of work that is due on each day of the week steady as well.

### HOW SHOULD I TRACK STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN MY HYBRID COURSE?

There are many policy approaches to engagement and attendance issues in hybrid classes. The approach that will work best for your class depends on whether the engagement issue is with the synchronous session attendance or asynchronous work completion. Here are a few options to consider as you craft your attendance and engagement policies:

Assign everything a point value, even if it's just a completion grade. Making sure to give points for the synchronous session will help students to come to class and not simply do the asynchronous work. We recommend giving equal credit to both asynchronous and synchronous sessions for hybrid classes.



Ariel M. Goldenthal ©2020 created for the Composition Program at George Mason University. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

You may want to consider increasing the weight of small-stakes assignments and participation to 30% or 40% so that students fully grasp how important it is to complete all the smaller assignments--they can't just complete the major assignments without having attended class and participated in the critical thinking and analysis work that happens synchronously. If you choose to increase the weight of small-stakes assignments to 30%-40%, it's important to grade these assignments for more than completion, even if you use a simple rubric.

We recommend building in a cushion for student engagement. This can take the form of extra points (for example, if you planned to assign 400 points over the course of the semester but only assigned 380, students could get the last 20 points as a sort of bonus/fail safe) or dropping the lowest asynchronous work grade.

One way to hopefully avoid lack of engagement is to, in the first couple weeks of the semester, set and keep to very strict deadlines, but don't assign too many points to the work that students do. This will help students to see the importance of submitting work on time, but they will still be able to make up the few points that they may have lost if they didn't complete it on time.

---

#### HOW CAN I AVOID MULTIPLE PREPS IF I HAVE HYBRIDS THAT MEET SYNCHRONOUSLY ON DIFFERENT DAYS?

The easiest way to manage multiple hybrid classes is if they meet synchronously on the same day, but if you are scheduled for hybrid classes that meet on different days, you can still use the same prep if you assign their asynchronous work to be due before the class meets in person.

---

#### AM I ASSIGNING TOO MUCH WEEKLY ASYNCHRONOUS WORK? TOO LITTLE?

All 3-credit courses, regardless of format, require students to commit to a total of 8-12 hours of work per week, and knowing that range is a good starting point when designing asynchronous coursework. Another important thing to consider is the type of asynchronous work you are assigning. Assigning too many types of work can be difficult for students (and faculty) to juggle, and it may be useful to assign different due dates to different types of work. For example, reading responses might be due on Monday, while writing process work that will be discussed in class might be due on Wednesday.

---

#### SHOULD I HOLD ONLINE OFFICE HOURS OR IN-PERSON OFFICE HOURS?

Your institution may have a requirement of online office hours for hybrid classes, although if you are teaching fully asynchronous courses as well, you will likely be holding online office hours for those courses. You may decide to hold online office hours for *some* of your required hours (for example, if you are teaching 2 face-to-face courses and 2 hybrid courses, you might offer 1 hour of online office hours), or you may decide to allow students to schedule a virtual conference with you. Whatever path you choose, there are a few different virtual conferencing tools that you can consider using:



Ariel M. Goldenthal ©2020 created for the Composition Program at George Mason University. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

- LMS video conferencing tool: This tool is embedded within the LMS, which allows all students to easily access it. Some faculty, however, have found that LMS-specific tools don't work on all browsers, and some students have been unable to use it.
- Google Hangout: This tool works well for group conferences and you can invite users to join a call using a URL, so they will not have to sign in with their gmail email address.
- Zoom: This tool is downloaded and also accessible through the internet browser using a link, which means that students do not need to sign in to access it. Although it is not embedded within the LMS, faculty and students have found it easy to use.

## DESIGNING THE COURSE: SCAFFOLDING AND TRANSITIONING

### CAN I DESIGN THE FIRST COUPLE WEEKS OF THE COURSE AND THEN ADJUST AFTER I SEE HOW IT GOES?

Hybrid classes are much less flexible than fully asynchronous or synchronous classes due to the nature of the dual modes and the structure required to help students best understand these modes. One of the most time-consuming things to design in a new hybrid class is the structure of asynchronous versus synchronous work: What will you teach in each form? Answering that question, choosing the due dates for assignments, and selecting the learning tools that students will use, are all things that must be done before the semester starts. Once the course begins, it is very difficult to change any of these big-picture elements.

### WRITING IS A RECURSIVE PROCESS--CAN I OVERLAP UNITS IN MY HYBRID CLASS?

Hybrid classes work best when the units are completely separate, although you can, of course, reference previous units and lessons in your introductions to help students transition. Students often have difficulty juggling different assignments and types of writing in hybrid or blended classes.

### WHAT PARTS OF MY COURSE SHOULD I MOVE ASYNCHRONOUSLY?

Although each class is different, the experience from the Hybrid Teaching and Learning Team has been that when developing a hybrid course, it's useful to think of it as an entirely new course, rather than a transformation of a fully asynchronous or fully synchronous course. Some faculty choose to prioritize deliverables and individual work asynchronously while also emphasizing active learning and collaborative work for the synchronous session. A typical asynchronous module might include a reading assignment, a visual (like a Prezi or an infographic), and then an individual written response. In this way,



Ariel M. Goldenthal ©2020 created for the Composition Program at George Mason University. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

the hybrid class acts as a flipped or inverted classroom. You can read more about active learning and the flipped classroom [here](#).

When creating hybrid visual-textual materials for the asynchronous portion of your class, the following tools may be useful. These are all free tools, though Prezi and Canva do offer paid options as well:

[Prezi](#): A step up from PowerPoint presentations

[Canva](#): Creating infographics

---

#### HOW CAN I MAKE SURE THAT MY ASYNCHRONOUS AND SYNCHRONOUS SESSIONS ARE CONNECTED SO STUDENTS DON'T FEEL LIKE THEY'RE IN TWO DIFFERENT CLASSES?

The time between the synchronous session of one week and the asynchronous session of the next is similar to the break between meetings of a fully face-to-face class: the transition is helped by the scaffolding of weekly lessons and learning goals. Transitioning between the asynchronous session and the synchronous session of the same week, however, is unique to a hybrid class. A simple way of connecting these two parts is by utilizing the first 5-10 minutes of class. Beginning the class by asking students to complete an activity that incorporates the work that they did asynchronously may include a think/pair/share about the reading for that class, a reflection on the writing that they did, or a mini-peer review of the process work that they completed. Subsequent activities should also require students to draw on the knowledge that they learned, just as activities in synchronous classes ask students to use what they learned from your presentation on the material.

---

#### SHOULD I HOLD PEER REVIEW WORKSHOPS ASYNCHRONOUSLY OR SYNCHRONOUSLY?

Most faculty have found, especially for lower-level courses, that peer review workshops work best synchronously.

There are pros and cons to both options, and you may decide to try both during your hybrid class. If you decide to hold peer review workshops asynchronously, we recommend that you complete at least one peer review synchronously or spend some time discussing peer review expectations. Asynchronous peer review workshops, especially for lower-level courses, can benefit from a directed worksheet.

---

#### WHERE CAN I FIND OTHER RESOURCES FOR DESIGNING A HYBRID CLASS?

### TROUBLESHOOTING THE COURSE: HELP! SOMETHING IS WRONG!



Ariel M. Goldenthal ©2020 created for the Composition Program at George Mason University. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

---

## MY STUDENTS EMAIL ME FREQUENTLY WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT DUE DATES, ASSIGNMENT LOCATIONS, ETC. WHAT CAN I DO TO AVOID THIS?

Placing a weekly to-do list at the top of each weekly folder is an easy way to help students keep track of the asynchronous lesson modules, any reading they have to do, work they need to complete, and when everything is due.

Pre-scheduling reminders to go out before rough drafts and final drafts of major assignments are due is another good way to avoid frequent student emails about due dates.

---

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY STUDENTS ARE HAVING TROUBLE NAVIGATING OR ACCESSING THE ONLINE PAGE OF MY COURSE?

Helping your students acclimate to the LMS course page begins before the first day of class. You can send all enrolled students an email that explains what your hybrid course will look like (which will also catch any students who didn't know they had enrolled in a hybrid course) and what will be expected of them in the course.

In the first week, spend some time making sure that your students can access all the important parts of your Blackboard course. You can also create a screen capture video of your course page.

Finally, it's important to remember that you are the instructor, and not tech support. There is an adjustment period to be expected, but if students are struggling with technological issues, recommend that they contact your institution's technical support office.

---

## HOW QUICKLY DO I NEED TO RETURN STUDENT WORK AND GIVE FEEDBACK?

The answer to this question depends heavily on what types of assignments you assign for the asynchronous portion of the class, but regardless of what kinds of feedback you are giving, it's important to schedule weekly time to respond to student work so that you don't fall behind. Here are some different types of assignments and recommendations for how quickly you should aim to give feedback, organized from fastest to slowest:

- Asynchronous work in preparation for the synchronous class: If students are completing process work that they will need for the synchronous class, it's important to give immediate feedback. Examples of this include thesis statement drafts, outlines, and possible research questions.
- Discussion forum posts: Whenever students are engaging with each other on the discussion forum, you should plan to comment on their writing fairly quickly. This allows you to be more visible in the asynchronous portion of the course and gives you the opportunity to see how the students are interacting with each other asynchronously.



Ariel M. Goldenthal ©2020 created for the Composition Program at George Mason University. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

- Low-stakes assignments: Low-stakes assignments that are not needed for the synchronous class can receive feedback slower than the previous two types of assignments, although of course there are always exceptions.
- Major assignment rough drafts: The speed at which you give feedback on full rough drafts depends on when students' final drafts are due, but generally you don't need to return them as quickly as you do asynchronous work needed for the synchronous class or discussion forum posts.
- Major assignment final drafts: Aim to return major assignments within 2 weeks of receiving them.

