

Plan and prepare

A great teacher can transform a subject and inspire students to succeed. Learning the most effective teaching strategies does not happen overnight. It comes from not only having a good lesson plan for each individual section but also a view of how individual sections fit into the grand scheme of things. It is universally acknowledged that the standard for a good teaching session, while difficult to achieve, is very easy to identify. Planning and preparing for a class in which the teacher wants the participants to engage in the learning activity in an unconventional classroom requires a different form of preparation.

The most obvious and important difference is that a class can truly succeed only if everyone (the participants) including the faculty is prepared. Hence the focus is on planning and preparation.

In Hyflex teaching, it is the responsibility of the faculty to keep the participants as connected as possible - connected to each other, connected to the facilitator at the same time provide flexible learning experiences.

What works and why

Technology has played an important role in transforming higher education to accommodate students' individual learning styles and requirements. From adaptive learning tools to video conferencing, technology has changed how students learn.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, Hybrid, HyFlex, and other blended learning models became vital necessary for higher education institutions. Safety was the priority and minimizing travel and contact was mandatory.

	Hybrid learning	Hyflex learning	Blended learning
Description	Hybrid learning is a combination of traditional classroom teaching and remote schooling.	Students are given choice in how they participate in the course and engage with the material in the mode that works best for them over the course and from session to session.	A dedicated strategy that combines in-person teaching online learning tools.
	Can be synchronous or asynchronous		

Choosing what works in the given situation

Purpose	Learning model	Logic
Reduce dropping off	Blended / Hyflex	Blended courses ensure that face-to-face learning is made as productive, and discussion-driven as possible. Hyflex course gives flexibility to learners
Ensure equal access	Blended	Faculty can provide additional flexibility. Works well in higher education. Learners can browse through supplementary learning materials to be up to date with the learning
Track student progress and insights	Hybrid/Blended	Hybrid courses enable the learners to receive immediate verbal feedback from instructors and/or peers. Blended courses ensure that student participation is at its peak. Introvert students can participate in online activities.

Ensuring flexibility

1. Making conscious efforts to design the courses
Instructors usually approach course design in a “forward design” manner. That means they primarily focus on aspects regarding how to teach the content, develop assessments around it, then try and make connections to the primary learning objectives.

A summary of the backward design approach:

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Description	<p>Identify the desired results for students by establishing the overall goal/s of learning.</p> <p>Focuses on identifying what students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand • Know • Be able to do 	<p>Focuses on evidence of learning by assessment.</p> <p>Faculty members plan the required performance tasks and evidence of understanding.</p> <p>Performance tasks determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What students will demonstrate • What evidence will prove their understanding. <p>This can include self-reflections and self-assessments on learning.</p>	<p>Details out the learning activities that will lead students to the desired results.</p>
Design questions	<p>What should be the desired outcome? (What should the students understand, know and being able to do?)</p>	<p>What will be the evidence for the desired results, such as desired understanding?</p>	<p>Which learning activities promote understanding, knowledge, skill, and student interest?</p>
Design considerations	<p>Expertise and interest of the faulty members.</p>		<p>Research-based list of learning and teaching strategies.</p> <p>Essential and enabling knowledge and skills.</p>
Filters (design criteria)	<p>Enduring ideas and opportunities for authentic, discipline-based work.</p>	<p>Valid, reliable, authentic and sufficient assessment.</p>	
Results in	<p>A unit or sequence of lessons framed around enduring</p>	<p>A unit or sequence of lessons anchored in credible and vital evidence</p>	<p>Coherent learning experiences & teaching that evoke and develop the desired understandings, promote</p>

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
	understandings and essential questions.	of the desired understandings.	interest and make excellent performance more likely.

2. Synchronous versus Asynchronous learning

Asynchronous learning strategies give the learners more time to form their thoughts and consider all different approaches of the topic before offering an opinion. This strategy prevents slow students from getting outshined by fast learners and spontaneous thinkers. It enables the students to work at their own pace/schedule.

Synchronous strategies allow students access to real-time feedback and immediate responses to questions. Virtual tutoring sessions, and assignment critiques provide the real-time communication to students. This ensures that they are engaged in the learning and stay focused.

	Synchronous	Asynchronous
Description	<p>Requires students and instructors to be online at the same time</p> <p>Prescribes a specific time for virtual office hours, tutoring sessions, and scheduled assignment critiques</p> <p>Requires the students to be online at a specific time to participate</p>	<p>Allows students to take online courses on their own schedule</p> <p>Provides materials, lectures, tests, and assignments that can be accessed at any time</p> <p>Defines a time frame for students in which they need to connect at least once or twice-usually one week</p> <p>Allows students the overall freedom to contribute whenever they choose</p>
When to use?	<p>Creating speed and intimacy, and fostering a sense of belonging, particularly in online and hybrid environments</p> <p>Running interactive activities, like polling, quizzes and discussions</p>	<p>Helping students collaborate with peers through online group work.</p> <p>Assigning prep work before any synchronous lessons, in-person or online.</p> <p>Providing students with an added level of flexibility in assessments, readings and lecture modules. By allowing students to learn on their own schedule, they get the flexibility they need to find a time and place where they can engage with course materials.</p>

	Classroom	Online Synchronous	Online Asynchronous
Content	Engaging presentation of the content.	Faculty addresses online students in the same way as the in-class students.	Faculty member acknowledges online students in class recordings and in recorded messages.
Engagement	Meaningful discussions, Group/Peer learning activities (May or may not involve the faculty member).	Faculty engages online students during in-class discussions and peer/group activities.	Faculty member is active during online discussions Encourages the students to contribute to the conversation over time.
Assessment	Ongoing assessment of learning during presentation and interactivities/activities.	The faculty introduces opportunities for interaction to support informal assessment.	Realtime feedback given to students.

What should one do?

- Decide what objectives are for using communication
- Inform learners of the expectations on how the digital communication tools need to be used
- Facilitate and monitor both synchronous and asynchronous dialogue to keep it on topic
- Be aware of those who do not to participate
- Be organized
- Be flexible
- Ensure time for learning how to use communication tools
- Ensure time for interaction
- Outline the rules for participation in the syllabus
- Use audio-visuals when appropriate
- Summarize the major points at the end of each session
- Prepare a contingency plan

Mitigating disruption

Resilient pedagogy allows the members of the faculty to facilitate learning experiences that are designed to be adaptable to fluctuating conditions and disruptions. Resilient teaching approaches consider how the learning context may require new forms of interactions between the faculty, students, content, and tools. Additionally, they necessitate the capacity to rethink the design of learning experiences based on a nuanced understanding of context.

Values to be considered

The HyFlex course design is built upon four fundamental values:

1. Learner Choice
2. Equivalency
3. Reusability
4. Accessibility

Each of these values has a corresponding guiding, or universal, principle for designers and instructors to follow. These four aspects provide a strong foundation for the teaching sessions.

Fundamental value 1 – Learners’ choice

Provide meaningful participation modes and enable students to choose between participation modes as needed. It is important that the students have this choice. Without a meaningful choice, there is no flexibility ... and so no HyFlex and the result is a standard hybrid course. Choosing to implement this principle requires that the faculty members value providing participation choice to students more than they value forcing everyone into the “best” way of learning a set of content.

The preparation should include identifying the ideal participations modes for the students in the classroom and the ones who have joined remotely.

Fundamental value 2 – Equivalency

Once the participation modes have been identified the faculty members need to ensure that these modes lead to equivalent learning. That is learners who have joined online and joined in the class have participation modes that will yield the same outcome. Providing an alternative approach to students which leads to inconsistent learning is considered as poor instructional practice if not an unethical practice.

The preparation should include identifying the participation modes that will encourage learners who are online as well as physically present to participate in the learning activity. One can use different participation modes for the same activity, but one has to foresee and consider the learning outcome for these modes.

Fundamental value 3 – Reusability

There are many teaching artefacts that can be reused. Transcripts/notes, video recordings, debates and discussions, presentations and learning aids in the form of handouts, and other forms of representation of activities in the classroom can be very useful for both online students and for classroom students who would want a review/revision after the session is completed.

The preparation should focus on reusing the existing materials. Infact artifacts from some learning activities, such as, glossary, bibliographic resource collections, and research papers, may become perpetual learning resources for all students in future sessions also.

Fundamental value 4 – Accessibility

Students need the technologies (hardware, software, networks) and skills in using technology to make legitimate choices about participation modes. It may be incumbent upon an instructor or

academic program to provide resources and extra training to students (and instructors) so that flexible participation is a real option.

Predictions of future

The pandemic has paved the way for great change and adaptation in the field of education. Teaching and learning moved from conventional classrooms to move to virtual classrooms. Neither the students nor the faculty members were prepared for this paradigm shift. The good news is that everyone adapted to this change. This adaptation of educational institutions made the experts foresee the future differently.

The recent changes in the field of education tell us that we must brace ourselves for the new realities of higher education. Here are some predictions of how the future of higher education might turn out to be.

Outcome-based education.

The role of faculty members will become more crucial than ever. Contrary to the fear that digitizing learning will result in a diminishing of the role of the faculty member, the demand for outcome-based education proves otherwise. It is recommended that faculty members foresee this change and act as subject matter experts to create digital content and revolutionize the higher education landscape by providing unified content experiences for students.

Upskilling requirement

The value placed on degrees and 'just-in-time' education will be in demand. Education will be more immediate and present/future-oriented. The increasing need for upskilling and reskilling because of the knowledge explosion and pandemic will tilt the balance towards educational programs that are aligned with the labor market. Badges and certificates will increase in value. As technology evolves, it is necessary to prepare the students for the challenges in the corporate world. That is why, apart from providing the students with their degrees, institutions will prepare them to tackle the challenges that they may come across.

Need for immersive learning experiences

There will be a demand for hybrid and flex pedagogical approaches. The days are not too far when a learner will stay on the campus and attend virtual classes. Faculty members must update themselves with the use of technology and technology-aided pedagogy to ensure that no one is left out.