

# Draft undergraduate course definitions and additions to the University calendar glossary

## Background

In the context of the pandemic, wholly novel and often significant changes were made to course delivery methods to help ensure instructional continuity. To help instructors, students, and staff be able to describe these learning experiences, new terms like “remote course” were adopted. This practice of naming and describing course types is not new — Memorial University had adopted terms (e.g., distance learning course, independent study course) to help describe different learning experiences prior to the pandemic.

Missing from these different terms, and their underlying approaches to course delivery, is a common understanding of just what is likely to be expected of students and instructors. With a growing interest in adding flexibility to course design and integrating educational technologies to allow for meeting across greater distances and times, it is an appropriate time to develop a more common set of definitions of undergraduate courses to provide learners and academic units with clarity and transparency on fundamental course characteristics (detailing such as when—or even if—classes are scheduled or where final exams are written).

A working group of the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee (STLC) was struck in Fall 2021 to draft definitions. The working group delivered the draft definitions to the STLC for review, feedback, and revision. Now, the STLC is seeking feedback on these draft definitions. The goal is to bring the definitions forward for approval at Senate. If approved, these course definitions would be added to the undergraduate course offerings and two new terms would be added to the University Calendar glossary. The goal is to have course definitions approved for April 2022, in time to inform Fall 2022 course registration.

## Q&A

Q: How would course type be communicated to students?

A: While the answer to this question was outside the scope of the working group, it would be intended that the Office of the Registrar would be able to identify and communicate types of courses to students when they registered.

Q: Is there a default delivery method?

A: The definitions are not intended to identify a “default” course delivery method. Given current practice and preference, is expected that the in-person definition would most likely be considered the de facto default delivery method.

Q: Is this an exhaustive list of definitions for course types?

A: The group of six draft definitions are intended to describe a majority of courses offered in a semester. but it is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Any course offered that falls outside any defined approach to delivery would simply not be labelled with one of the definitions.

Q: Are these definitions fixed?

A: No, as new course delivery approaches are adopted, new definitions can be added, and as practices change current definitions can be revised.

Q: What is the difference between assessments and exams?

A: Exams are a subset of courses assessments that can require invigilation, most often in-person. Exam delivery can be supported by other units (e.g., Office of the Registrar, Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning).

## Undergraduate course definitions

**In-person** courses are facilitated entirely through in-person learning, with classes held at regularly scheduled times.

Class meeting times: synchronous, with course days and times listed.

Location: in person.

Assessments: submitted in person or via learning management system.

Exams: when used, invigilated exams completed in-person at a scheduled date and time.

*Working group comments: The term in-person was selected (versus on-campus) as courses could occur in locations other than an established Memorial campus (e.g., field course or clinical placement).*

**Independent study** courses are supervised by a faculty member who meets regularly with the student. Most of the learning is completed independently by the student, guided by a selection of learning resources (e.g., readings) or experiences (e.g., research) made by the supervising faculty. The workload of an independent study course is comparable to other courses with the same credit hour value.

Class meeting times: synchronous, with days and times selected by student and supervising faculty member.

Location: in person or online, selected by student and supervising faculty member.

Assessments: submitted in person or via learning management system.

Exams: typically, not used; if used, invigilated exams completed in person at a scheduled date and time.

*Working group comments: This definition includes a statement about comparable workload; this level of detail is not included in other proposed definitions in this document. This inclusion was inspired by other Universities' definitions, where a statement about comparable workload is included—the underlying rationale here is to ensure the scope of the course is appropriate for the time a student would have.*

**Hyflex** is a course where each session is offered in person and synchronously online, with students deciding how to participate. Classes are held at regularly scheduled times.

Class meeting times: synchronous, with dates and times listed.

Location: each session is offered in person and synchronously online, the online component facilitated through the University's learning technologies (e.g., web conferencing systems).

Assessments: submitted in person or via learning management system.

Exams: when used, invigilated exams completed in person at a scheduled date and time.

*Working group comments: Hyflex is an emerging practice at Memorial. The working group turned to the broader literature to develop the definition (see Beatty, 2014), which identifies on-going student choice in location as a key component of the course model (e.g., a student could attend one class in person and the next online). Student choice might not reflect current practice at Memorial. Omitted from this definition is the ability for a student to access from a third modality: asynchronous. It was determined that this is not a current practice at Memorial and would unnecessarily add to the complexity of the proposed definition and ensuing course design.*

**Hybrid / Blended** is a course where components of the course are facilitated in person, and components of the course are facilitated online. Classroom and online activities are selected by the instructor to complement each other, with all students in the course participating the same way in the activities. Students and instructors meet at regularly scheduled times for in-person learning. Typically, in these courses 50% or more of the scheduled course meeting time occurs in person. For online activities, students and instructors can meet synchronously (e.g., attending online seminars) or engage asynchronously (e.g., viewing pre-recorded lectures) as detailed in the course syllabus. Online learning is facilitated through the University's learning technologies.

Class meeting times: synchronous, with dates and times listed, but with less in-person meeting time than a similar in-person course.

Location: a blend of in-person learning and online learning, selected by the instructor. Online component facilitated through the University's learning technologies (e.g., the learning management and web conferencing systems).

Assessments: submitted in person or via learning management system.

Exams: when used, invigilated exams completed in person at a scheduled date and time.

*Working group comments: A single term will need to be selected to describe this course. Given an environmental scan at Memorial, hybrid is the preferred term. The working group, however, notes that selecting the term hybrid (versus blended) will likely lead to greater confusion with the term hyflex. Hybrid and hyflex are distinct approaches, so their confusion would not be ideal. For that reason, the working group recommends adopting the term blended.*

**Remote** courses are delivered entirely through the internet, where students and the instructor are scheduled to meet at the same time, often from different locations, through the use of University's learning technologies. Course material can also be delivered asynchronously (e.g., via pre-recorded lectures). Instructors may choose to meet less frequently than the scheduled days and times, as detailed in the course syllabus.

Class meeting times: synchronous, with dates and times listed, or asynchronous.

Location: online, facilitated through the University's learning technologies (e.g., the learning management and web conferencing systems).

Assessments: submitted online via learning management system.

Exams: when used, invigilated exams completed on campus at a scheduled date and time.

*Working group comments: Some remote courses make use of asynchronous material (e.g., pre-recorded lectures) that replace synchronous class time, but the typical practice that has emerged through the last two academic years is the synchronous lecture, which then requires students to attend at a scheduled meeting time. In some cases, from the student perspective there could be very little different in the experience of a remote course from that of an online course. A key differentiator, however, is the requirement to write any invigilated exam on campus. Any remote course with in-person learning expected (e.g., a lab component) would be best described as hybrid / blended.*

**Online** courses are facilitated entirely through the internet, where students and the instructor most often engage with the course at different times, from different locations, using the University's learning technologies. As detailed in the course syllabus, some online courses will have components (e.g., presentations) scheduled to occur synchronously. Any required course element needs to be accessible asynchronously.

Class meeting times: most often asynchronous, with no dates and times scheduled; some specific meeting times can be scheduled by the instructor (e.g., a course welcome and orientation), but synchronous attendance is not required.

Location: online, facilitated through the University's learning technologies (e.g., the learning management and web conferencing systems).

Assessments: submitted via learning management system.

Exams: when used, invigilated exams completed online, on campus or at an examination centre; dependent on student's location.

*Working group comments: Online courses are designed to maximize the capacity for students located in different locations (and time zones) to participate. To that end, the amount of synchronous learning experiences in an online course are minimal, and any synchronous experience in an online should also be offered in an asynchronous format (e.g., sharing a recorded version of synchronous class meeting).*

*Not visible in the definition, most online courses are supported by the Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, including development, maintenance and coordinating exams and invigilation (where*

appropriate). An online course is the only course type where invigilated exams can be written off-campus, and often written at more than one scheduled time.

**Calendar Glossary** (the following terms to be added)

Asynchronous: a course component where students and the instructor engage with course content and each other at different times, often from different locations.

Synchronous: a course component where students and the instructor engage with the course content and each other at the same time.

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## References

Beatty, B. (2014). Hybrid courses with flexible participation: The HyFlex course design. In *Practical applications and experiences in K-20 blended learning environments* (pp. 153-177). IGI Global.