**Guidance for Simultaneous Online and On Campus Delivery**

**Background**

* The Blended Learning Principles state that “*All courses should provide timetabled synchronous[[1]](#footnote-1) opportunities for peer to peer engagement and engagement with academic staff. These opportunities can be part of the assessed course (e.g. tutorials) or additional non-assessed activities*.”
* Additionally, the Timetabling Principles state:

(i) “*The teaching timetable will include all synchronous activity, both online and on campus, in order to provide structure for students. All synchronous activities will also be displayed in MyTimetable so that all students can get a clear oversight of all synchronous activity*.”

1. “*Students will normally be able to access an element of each course on campus. In line with the* [*Key Principles for Blended Learning*](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/blended-learning.php#panel10928)*, these may be part of the assessed course (e.g. tutorials or practicals) or additional non-assessed activities. The opportunities for on campus teaching will be maximised in the development of the timetable, however repetition will be minimised where possible, whilst keeping within the physical and staff resource constraints. Due to physical capacity limits for buildings, practical-based subjects may need to be given priority for room allocation*.”

* All blended courses will normally include a mix of students participating in on campus and those participating fully online.

**How can synchronous sessions be delivered to online and on campus students?**

There are two possible approaches to delivery (i) simultaneous delivery to both cohorts, and (ii) separate delivery to each cohort. The following provides guidance on things that should be considered in each approach.

Simultaneous Delivery

Delivery of a simultaneous session where online students remotely join the on campus physical class (e.g. via Collaborate or MS Teams). This can be either (i) as discussion-based activity, or (ii) as question-led discussion activity. Points to consider for both approaches are listed below:

*Discussion-based activity*

* For large classes where the session is planned to involve an interactive discussion with the full cohort, it is almost impossible for the online students to be able to follow the class discussion due to challenges with audio pick-up and the speed of conversation in the classroom. This can result in the online students having a separate discussion from those in the class or even disengaging from the session.
* For smaller group discussions (e.g. as breakout groups, small tutorials), it may be possible to establish mixed groups of online and on campus students however clear guidance and instructions on the tasks and each students’ role needs to be provided and the online and classroom students require access and willingness to use a microphone. All resources should be shared with all students before the session begins. These sessions still need to be facilitated so may require additional tutor support or necessitates limitation of the numbers of groups to a manageable number to enable the tutor to have a presence and support all groups.
* While this approach may seem more efficient from a workload perspective, it is not simple to deliver and therefore should only be considered where (i) staff are confident and have practiced, and (ii) where necessary, additional academic support is available.
* Timing of simultaneous delivery also requires careful consideration given geographical distribution of students.

*Question-led discussion activity*

* Tools such as Ombea (the University’s online polling tool) can be used successfully in simultaneous delivery to online and on campus to facilitate interactive learning. This approach strengthens the interaction between tutor and student but significantly less peer to peer engagement within the class (i.e. students can compare their responses to the cohort but not to any particular individual).
* Further guidance is available [here](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/on-campus-experience-10725.php#use-collaborate)

Separate Delivery

Delivery of separate online and on campus sessions. This is far simpler to do but does necessitate delivery of additional teaching sessions with associated workload implications. In delivering such an approach, colleagues should consider the social engagement between the cohorts as detailed below:

* To support the return of students to campus it is important that opportunity is provided to enable development of cross-cohort relationships to avoid creating two distinct courses within one. This can be achieved through careful course design (e.g. including effective asynchronous mechanisms for students to get to know one another (see [here](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/on-campus-experience-10725.php))). This proactive monitoring by the course tutors and adaption, as necessary, to ensure active social engagement.

**Additional Guidance**

Where colleagues wish further guidance and support, this can be provided through the Centre for Academic Development representative on your School Task & Finish Group.

Further guidance is also available on the Blended Learning Principles website which can be accessed [here](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/blended-learning.php).

1. Synchronous: teaching is undertaken in real time; Asynchronous: teaching materials are prepared and are accessed by students at different times [↑](#footnote-ref-1)