

Key Considerations for Course Modality Choices Fall 2020

The intent of this decision support framework is to assist you in making decisions for fall courses. The goal is to provide you with the greatest amount of flexibility in your course decision. As you consider which modality is the best fit for your courses in fall 2020, the following three foundations may offer initial guidance:

COVID capacity:

Each classroom has a standard calculated capacity that accounts for social distancing needs and ventilation considerations. In most rooms, this will be 20-30% of normal capacity.*

- For your scheduled classroom, how does the COVID capacity number compare to your anticipated course enrollment?
- Given the COVID capacity, is it possible to offer a portion of the course in-person, with students attending on alternating days of the week, or for the instructor to lecture remotely to students in the room?

**It may be possible to move your course to larger room across campus. You should work with your college course scheduler and associate dean to make a request through the process developed by the Office of the Registrar.*

Technology availability:

By fall 2020, we expect most classrooms to have the technology infrastructure that can support some of the blended modality options described in this document. Technology upgrades are being considered for all rooms at this time, including general use classrooms and departmental spaces. Additional information will be released highlighting upgrade specifics when available.

- Will my specific teaching strategies (e.g., lecture, student discussion, class participation) be supported by the available technology?

Health and safety awareness:

Instructors and students have concerns regarding their own health and safety as well as that of their family members or communities.

- To what degree do you feel prepared to teach in-person given the current state of COVID-19?
- The university will have a requirement for wearing face coverings and will establish capacity guidelines that ensure social distancing in the classrooms. In addition, clear face shields will be available for faculty to wear when teaching. Will these safety measures mitigate your concerns enough such that you would feel comfortable teaching the class in person?
- Are you in a vulnerable group as outlined by the CDC?

General Considerations

The following general considerations will be required for all instructors.

Health of safety of our faculty and staff. The university will continue to encourage those individuals in the [CDC high risk categories](#) for COVID-19 complications to work remotely. This includes people who are 65 or older and those with underlying health conditions outlined on the CDC website. All faculty are being asked to express their preference for teaching modality for their classes as part of this planning process.

- Faculty in the CDC high risk categories should be encouraged to exercise their option to teach remotely.
- All other faculty preferences should be considered to the maximum extent possible as you finalize your course offerings for a mix of in-person, blended, and online options.

Ability to accommodate students due to COVID-19 concerns. We recognize that for a variety of reasons, this fall will continue to be disruptive to students as well as faculty and staff. Teaching modalities will need to accommodate students who are sick or who will be in a 14-day quarantine. For example, international students or those arriving to start the semester from states identified by KDHE for travel and exposure isolation/quarantine will need to quarantine for 14 days. Additionally, students who are at higher risk for complications from COVID-19 exposure will need to have online options available to them, or need an accommodation through the Student Access Center. Finally, we also know that some students and their families are expressing a desire to avoid in-person classes for the fall and we hope to provide online options to them as part of our course offerings, when possible.

Ability to pivot to fully remote teaching. We need to be prepared with contingency plans to move entirely to remote instruction if necessitated by COVID-19 surges at K-State or in our communities. The university is currently working to identify the circumstances that would trigger such a decision, but you and your faculty should consider such contingency planning as part of their class preparation.

Modality Considerations

The remainder of this decision support framework will define and provide in-person, blended and online models for your consideration. Ultimately, you will be asked by your department and/or college to provide information on the planned modality for your courses through a collection tool from the Office of the Registrar in order for your Fall 2020 courses to be accurately reflected in KSIS and to support advance planning by the university around proctoring. If you have questions about the process, contact your college course scheduler, Brian Niehoff (niehoff@ksu.edu) or Karen Pedersen (karenpedersen@ksu.edu). If you have pedagogical questions, contact gcid@ksu.edu and one of the university's instructional designers or other support personnel will follow-up.

Basic Decision Options:

Course Modality	Requirements or Conditions Necessary
Offer through In-Person Modality	If you prefer to teach in-person with appropriate safety measures in place, AND your anticipated enrollment is less than or equal to the classroom COVID capacity.
Offer through Blended Modality	If you prefer to teach in-person, AND your anticipated enrollment is greater than the COVID capacity but will accommodate alternating the attendance of students across your weekly schedule, AND the room is equipped with technology to record or allow simultaneous lecture capture.
Offer Online	If you are in a vulnerable group, or you do not feel safe, even with mitigation of safety measures, OR the COVID capacity of the room will not accommodate alternating student attendance across a week of class.

Definitions of Modalities

In-Person Modality

In-person courses are considered a traditional mode of teaching in which the instructor and students are all simultaneously present in the classroom space. Typically, this would include the physical presence of all students with the instructor, but can also accommodate an option for remote attendance by the instructor or students if needed due to COVID-related interruptions.

In-Person Models for Consideration:

Choosing an in-person model could depend on the course topic, learning objectives, the level of the students and a range of other variables. Below are two models to consider.

A. In-Person - Physical Presence

This type of in-person course is the traditional model. The instructor and the students will both be in the physical classroom space, although some homework and supplemental course materials may be offered through the course Canvas site.

Requirements:

1. Instructor feels safe teaching with students in the same room
2. Enrollment in the course is less than or equal to COVID capacity of the room

Additional Considerations:

1. If the course enrollment exceeds the COVID capacity, can it be taught using split sections, where subgroups of students attend on alternating days?
2. If course enrollment exceeds the COVID capacity, is there a larger room available that would accommodate the size of the class?

Next Steps

1. Check the COVID capacity of your currently assigned classroom to see if your currently enrolled students can fit into the space once social distancing measures are in place.
2. If the current classroom will fit your enrolled students, adjust your teaching plans accordingly to allow for social distancing in the space.
3. Create a back-up plan if the in-person elements of the course are disrupted by the university going entirely remote or due to other complexities caused by COVID-19.
4. If the current classroom will not fit your enrolled students, talk with your college course scheduler who will coordinate with the Office of the Registrar to determine if a larger classroom is available.
5. If you cannot find a classroom that will allow for all of your enrolled students to be physically present with you at the same time, consider one of the blended modality options as an alternative, such as split sections.

B. In-Person - Remote Presence (also called Remote Lecture in the blended model)

In this version of the in-person course, some or all students will be physically present in the classroom, but the instructor would present remotely via Zoom. Classroom instruction will take place during the assigned class time, although some homework and supplemental course materials may be offered through the course Canvas site. This allows for in-person experience even if the instructor does not feel safe or needs to quarantine.

Requirements:

1. Instructor does not feel safe teaching in the same room as the students
2. Enrollment in the course is less than or equal to COVID capacity of the room

Additional Considerations:

1. If the course enrollment exceeds the COVID capacity, can the instructor use split sections, where subgroups of students physically attend on alternating days?
2. If course enrollment exceeds the COVID capacity, is there larger room available that would accommodate the size of the class?
3. Can the in-class portion of the course be effectively facilitated without the instructor in the room?
4. If the instructor is not in the room, will the students maintain social distancing?
5. Would it be simpler to offer the course using an online modality?

Next Steps:

1. Check the COVID capacity of your currently assigned classroom to see if the enrolled students can fit into the space once social distancing measures are in place.
2. Check with your department or IT to ensure your current classroom has the appropriate technology to allow for remote Zoom lecture and/or facilitation.
3. If the current classroom will fit your enrolled students, adjust your teaching plans accordingly to allow for social distancing in the space and remote lecture and/or facilitation.
4. Create a back-up plan if the in-person elements of the course are disrupted by the university going entirely remote or due to other complexities caused by COVID-19.
5. If the current classroom will not fit your enrolled students, or if it does not have the needed technology, talk with your department head or other department administrators to see if another classroom is available.
6. If you cannot find a classroom that will allow for all of your enrolled students to be physically present with you at the same time, or that has the technology needed for remote lecture and/or facilitation, consider one of the blended modality options or online as alternatives.

Blended Modality

Blended courses are a structural decision as much as they are a pedagogical one because they operate through a replacement model. What that means is that you take an in-person course and replace some of the in-person time (e.g., live lecture or content delivery) with online elements (e.g., recorded lecture).

For example, if your course was scheduled for in-person meetings two times per week, in a blended format you might shift to just once per week for the in-person meeting with the other weekly meeting in an online (synchronous or asynchronous) format.

It is important to note that in a blended course, your credit hours would stay the same because the content or activities are simply shifted online. So, blended courses are a structural change that combines in-person and online pedagogies. People also refer to these kinds of courses as hybrids, which is interchangeable with blended.

Blended Models for Consideration:

Choosing one of the blended models could depend on your course topic, learning objectives, the level of your students and a range of other variables. Below, you'll find eight models to choose from.

For each of these models, you will need to:

1. Check the COVID capacity of your currently assigned classroom to see if your currently enrolled students can fit into the space once social distancing measures are in place.
2. If the current classroom will not fit your enrolled students, talk with your department head or other department administrators to see if another classroom is available, or if you have the option of offering split sections so that students attend on alternating days.
3. If the room is not large enough to accommodate split sections, you should consider one of the other blended or online modality options.
4. Adjust your teaching plans accordingly to allow for online (synchronous or asynchronous) activities and tasks.
5. Describe the in-person and online requirements for your course in the syllabus and discuss those elements on the first day of the course so that students know what is expected to successfully complete the course.
6. Create a back-up plan if the in-person elements of the course are disrupted by the university going entirely remote or due to other complexities caused by COVID-19.
7. Depending on the blended model that you choose, you may also need to check to ensure your classroom has the appropriate technology to allow for remote Zoom lecture and/or facilitation, streaming video capacity, and appropriate sound support.

A. In-Person Driver

This kind of blended course would have topics or content introduced during the in-person component of the course, and then students would practice and reinforce what they learned through the online component. This kind of in-person driver model can work well with topics such as mathematics or science, where students might see a demonstration and ask a lot of follow-up questions in-person, and then engage the concepts on their own working through practice problem sets online.

Pros

- You get to see students as they are learning a concept for the first time and check their comprehension in real-time.
- It may also be easier to set up practice problem sets as homework using textbook supplements that come ready-made.

Cons

- Can create a challenge for students who may think they know the material when they are with you in class, but then when they go to practice at home find themselves confused or with more questions.
- These kinds of courses may need to provide additional support through TAs or online office hours so that students can ask questions as they are working through practice problems.
- Opportunities to practice online, when not provided as a supplement to a textbook, can be time consuming for the instructor to create.

B. Online-Driver

Another model of a blended course is called an online-driver. This is also sometimes referred to as a “flipped” classroom model. A blended course in the online driver model works in the opposite way to the in-person driver. Rather than have concepts presented in-person first, the concepts are instead introduced online, with the in-person component of the course used for students to practice and apply what they have learned. The flipped model works well for courses that have a lot of active learning components, such as small-group work, team-based learning, lots of discussion, or student-led presentations.

Pros

- You can share a lot of content with students before the course starts so that more time can be spent in-person on active learning activities. As long as students engage with that content, the in-person elements of the course can be lively, engaging, and build on students’ knowledge of the online materials.
- There is a range of open educational resource materials available to share with students. Videos, simulations, demonstrations, games, and more are now free for instructors to incorporate into their courses.

Cons

- Can encourage students to procrastinate reviewing the course materials if they think that the in-person part of the course is just going to explain everything to them that they would have learned on their own. It’s important to make sure the in-person element of the course is building on the online pieces so that students don’t see those elements as repetitious or busy work.
- An instructor may need to create the online materials from scratch for their students depending on the topic of the course they are teaching. If the course is in a specific niche, there may be sparse ready-made or open educational resources to draw upon.

C. Remote Lecture (also called Remote Presence in the in-person model)

In this version of a blended course, some or all students will be physically present in the classroom, but the instructor will be remotely presenting via Zoom. Classroom instruction will take place during the assigned class time, although some homework and supplemental course materials may be offered through the course Canvas site.

Pros

- Instructors can maintain social distancing from the physical classroom.
- The instructor's lecture and/or facilitation can also be recorded for students who cannot be physically present, or students who need to attend the course remotely can join the instructor in the Zoom environment.
- Offers a high amount of flexibility for both instructors or students who may be ill or in quarantine.

Cons

- Many courses will exceed the COVID capacity for the classroom size and instructors may not have the option of choosing for their students to be in the same physical space at the same time.
- Requires appropriate social distancing and other safety measures to ensure student safety so certain classroom activities, such as small group work, may need to be modified.
- May be challenging to facilitate certain classroom activities from a remote location and some classroom activities will need to be prepared in advance to ensure students have the materials they need to complete the in-class work.

D. Split Sections

In this version of a blended course, students would be split into different sections to accommodate the safety requirements of social distancing based on COVID capacity. For example, a third of the class might meet in person on Monday, another third on Wednesday, and another third on Friday, with the remainder of the class seat time for each group of students occurring online. This model requires technology in the classroom that will accommodate lecture recording or live streaming for those students who are not attending in person. Testing may require the use of alternative or online assessments.

Pros

- Students can maintain social distancing in the physical classroom.
- All students experience the same amount of seat time over the semester.
- Although the students in this model are experiencing social distancing from each other and are only interacting with a small number of their peers, the instructor will see all students each week throughout the term and will have more exposure to more people overall.

Cons

- Given that each class learning experience is somewhat different, students' classroom experiences will differ, depending on which day of the week they attend.
- Can be challenging to coordinate the multiple groups of students.

E. Alternating Weeks

This model of a blended course would have students meeting in the classroom during alternating weeks of the course, with the other weeks taking place online. The alternating weeks models can work especially well for team-based or project-based courses, research-heavy courses, or courses where students are more advanced and doing independent work on their own. The alternating weeks model also pairs well with the experiential learning model described below.

Pros

- The flexibility that it offers the instructor and the students during the weeks that they are not expected to meet in-person.
- The alternating weeks format also offers students a good amount of project time to work independently or in teams.
- This format can also free up a lot of classroom space when used at scale.

Cons

- Students can feel disconnected from the instructor or each other if there is not strong engagement in the online components of the course.
- Students might fall behind if they are not completing their assigned work in between the in-person meetings.
- If combined with a team-based or independent project, this model expects that students will have some level of project management skills to help them be successful.

F. Experiential Learning

Another model of a blended course is one that focuses on experiential learning. This might include a service-learning component that is completed online or outside of the classroom environment, a course focused on team-based learning, an internship experience, or any other time that you are replacing part of the class time with an experience-based learning opportunity. The experiential learning model also pairs well with the alternating weeks model.

Pros

- In-person time can be minimized and scheduled such that all students do not need to attend on the same days.
- This kind of course can help students connect what they are learning in the classroom into a real-world situation or circumstance that makes the course material more relevant to their current lives or their lives post-college. Incorporating a journal or other reflective component in this kind of course can help students to process these connections.
- Students' experiences outside of the classroom can often create rich content for in-person discussions and activities.

Cons

- Experiential learning can involve challenging logistics to make sure that everything is functioning as it should to create an optimal learning experience. Service learning can involve risk management concerns, and team-based learning may require additional check-ins from the instructor to make sure that interpersonal relationships among students are remaining productive rather than creating challenges for learning.
- Students will be able to socialize with small groups, but will not be able to meet all of their classmates.

G. Hyflex

The hyflex blended model is one of the more flexible (hence its name), but also one of the more challenging to pull off. In the hyflex model, students are able to choose which modality, whether in-person or online, they want to engage with during any point in the course. For example, a student could attend in-person on Monday, but then decide to engage in the course online on Wednesday.

Pros

- It can serve large numbers of students in ways that are personalized to their learning preferences.
- This kind of structure works especially well for large-enrollment lecture-style courses where students would receive a similar experience whether online or in-person.
- Hyflex courses can be responsive to changes in the context or environment of an institution because they are nimble enough to shift modality at a moment's notice.

Cons

- In smaller courses, or in courses that include a lot of active learning engagement throughout, the hyflex model can cause some challenges since instructors must be prepared for any amount of student to engage in either modality.
- Hyflex models require technology that accommodates not only live lecture or recording, but also the ability to capture student discussions. It may also require Zoom capability so that online learners can participate.

H. Online Interactive

Online interactive course models have the majority of the course being held online, but there may be certain activities that are offered in the in-person environment such as exams, certain requirements related to labs, or other experiential learning requirements. Because some of the course will require students to complete an in-person component, it is important to ensure that students are aware of this element of the course and that they are capable of completing that in-person element.

Pros

- Online interactive courses can allow for students to learn and demonstrate applied skills that may be harder to assess in the online classroom.
- These courses can utilize asynchronous and synchronous elements, while also including experiential learning components that are difficult to translate for the online modality.

Cons

- Since online interactive courses require students to complete an in-person component, it is important to ensure that students are aware of this element of the course and that they are capable of completing that in-person element.
- If students do not live locally to the university, there may need to be accommodations if they are expected to complete in-person elements.

Online Modality

Online courses are traditionally defined as those in which 100% of the delivery takes place in the online environment through asynchronous activities, synchronous meetings, or a combination of both asynchronous and synchronous methods.

Online Models for Consideration:

Choosing an online model could depend on the course topic, learning objectives, the level of the students and a range of other variables. Below are three models to consider.

A. Synchronous

Synchronous-driven online courses are those in which the instructor and students meet regularly online in real-time meetings for lecture or other activities. The course may also be supplemented with other online activities or materials, but the majority of the student seat time is offered through synchronous meetings.

Pros

- Encourages social presence through the live meetings
- Meetings can also be recorded for students who may have to miss a session.

Cons

- Less flexible since the instructor and students need to meet together on a regular schedule. If students are working part- or full-time, or if they are attending the course from different time zones, the schedule may be challenging for some students.

Next Steps

1. Adjust your teaching plans and schedule accordingly to allow for regular online meeting times and ensure that your syllabus clearly articulates the mandatory synchronous meetings for your students.
2. Design a Canvas site structure that makes each week's recordings and materials easy for students to find and view if they want to re-watch a lecture, or if they need to miss a week due to illness.

B. Asynchronous

Asynchronous-driven online courses are those in which students are rarely, if ever, required to meet in a synchronous setting and instead complete asynchronous learning activities and engagement on their own time. Some synchronous online office hours or group meetings may be included in this type of course, but the majority of materials will be available to students through the Canvas course site.

Pros

- Designed to meet the needs of students with a range of schedules and time zones by being as flexible as possible.
- Both instructors and students often find this kind of course helps to keep their schedules flexible since there are few requirements for mandatory real-time sessions.
- Can also be helpful learning environments for students who prefer to have a little more time to think and process course materials, so this model can be a good fit for courses that have advanced theory, applied theory, or other approaches where students are engaging in a lot of analysis or synthesis-based tasks.

Cons

- Need intentional social presence activities to ensure that students feel connected to the instructor and to each other. These kinds of activities often need to be designed in advance and included in the course throughout the term to provide social connections in addition to a relationship between the students and the content.

Next Steps

1. Adjust your teaching plans accordingly to allow for asynchronous activities and tasks and ensure that your syllabus clearly articulates the asynchronous components for your students.
2. Design a Canvas site structure that makes each week's activities and materials easy for students to find and view.

C. Asynchronous/Synchronous Combination

Asynchronous/synchronous combination online courses include a mix of synchronous and asynchronous activities for students to complete. For example, students may have a once-per-week synchronous meeting with the instructor as a group via Zoom, but then spend the remaining amount of their course seat time completing other online activities as individuals or in groups. In this course format, there is a roughly half and half split between synchronous and asynchronous activities

Pros

- Asynchronous/synchronous combination online courses work well for courses that have a team-based or collaborative learning environment for students where they might need to meet as a whole group or in small groups throughout the term.
- Allows for easier social presence elements since those can be included in the synchronous meetings to help students connect with the instructor and each other to form relationships.

Cons

- Asynchronous/synchronous combination online courses can be more complex for students and for instructors since there can be a lot to juggle. It will be necessary to clearly outline the different components of the course in the syllabus so that students know the expectations of what is required for them each week of the term.

Next Steps

1. Adjust your teaching plans accordingly to allow for asynchronous and synchronous activities and tasks and ensure that your syllabus clearly articulates each of these components for your students.
2. Design a Canvas site structure that makes each week's recordings and materials easy for students to find and view if they want to re-watch a lecture, or if they need to miss a week due to illness.