


A Glossary of Teaching Activities and related concepts

The purpose of this glossary is to build a shared vocabulary to describe different elements of and common activities relating to teaching and learning. It is not intended to be exhaustive, nor in any way to form a regulatory framework or to restrict or constrain how teaching is delivered; it is merely a mechanism for labelling things that already take place to reduce ambiguity and confusion when clarity is needed in communication. It is recognised that this glossary combines, and in some cases conflates, multiple dimensions against which different activities could be categorised and described; it does so knowingly with the intention of achieving a pragmatic shared vocabulary rather than a perfect logical taxonomy. It includes both recommended terms, as well as notes of caution against using other terms where there is inherent risk of confusion or ambiguity. Although it may commonly be the case that a single teaching session can be usefully categorised by a single term, the terms can also usefully be applied at a finer level of granularity to describe multiple types of activity within a single teaching session.

Definitions followed by a superscript citation are taken verbatim from the sources, with commentary provided in the sidebar. Words in *italics* are University-specific additions or annotations.

Asynchronous and Synchronous	These are terms-of-art from Blended Learning used to describe whether activities take place at a specific scheduled moment in time, usually led by a member of staff (synchronous), or whether students are free to choose a time before a certain deadline that suits them (asynchronous).
Blended Learning	Blended learning is an approach to education that combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom methods. It requires the physical presence of both teacher and student, with some elements of student control over time, place, path, or pace. ^[WP1]
Demonstration	A session involving the demonstration of a practical technique or skill. Examples might include the demonstration of laboratory skills, clinical skills, performance art or fieldwork techniques. Demonstrations can take place virtually or in person. The size of a demonstration is likely to depend upon the number of students involved in the work concerned, as well as the nature of that work, but could also take place on a one-to-one basis. ^[QAA1]
Didactic 	While it is sometimes used informally to neutrally imply a method of teaching which is largely 'chalk and talk', its

There is little difference in practice between an 'asynchronous activity' and 'guided self-study'.

Recommend avoiding this term apart from where used in a

meaning is much more complex, often carrying moral or negative connotations.

precise technical sense.

Distance or Remote Learning

Distance learning and remote learning are terms that are used interchangeably by providers when describing teaching and learning activities. Both describe a method of delivery which involve activities that happen away from the physical site of a provider with students using digital means to engage with a programme, rather than having any requirement to visit the provider... Distance learning is a term that was in use before the widespread proliferation of digital approaches to learning and was initially related to courses delivered by correspondence. ^[QAA2]

External visits

A visit to a location outside of the usual learning spaces, to experience a particular environment, event, or exhibition relevant to the course of study. Examples are wide ranging and could include a visit to a business or industrial site, built environment site, museum or collection, to attendance at a performance or exhibition. These visits might be unsupervised or supervised, and supervisors could include staff or appointed representatives. Site visits may be carried out in groups of varying sizes, or by individuals, depending on the nature of the visit and the location. ^[QAA1]

Face to face and In-Person 

Face-to-face delivery of education and training programmes has been in common use for some time in the higher education sector. It has most often been used to describe an approach where the delivery of a programme happens at a provider with a staff member delivering learning and teaching directly to students. Its meaning is inextricably linked to communication styles and previously allowed a clear distinction to be made between communication in which individuals could see each other (such as a tutorial) and when they could not (such as a phone conversation). Given this, the use of the term face-to-face was used to denote if communication (and therefore delivery of some teaching and learning) was taking place in person or if it was taking place remotely. However, with the proliferation of videoconferencing, face-to-face communication can now take place when individuals are physically close or remote, given that individuals can see each other even if they are at a distance. ^[QAA2]

Recommend avoiding these terms because of their currently shifting meaning; instead prefer 'On-campus'

Fieldwork

Practical work conducted at an external site. Examples of fieldwork might include survey work and other forms of data collection, excavations and explorations. The work might be unsupervised or supervised, and supervision could be provided by staff or appointed representatives. Some fieldwork may be conducted virtually. Fieldwork might be

conducted in groups of various sizes, or by individuals, depending on the nature of the work involved. ^[QAA1]

Flipped Learning

A pedagogical approach in which the conventional notion of classroom-based learning is inverted: students are introduced to the learning material before class with classroom time then being used to deepen understanding through discussion with peers and problem-solving activities facilitated by teachers. ^[AHE1]

Flipped Learning is a kind of blended learning.

Hybrid Flexible / Hyflex

The hybrid flexible, or HyFlex, course format is an instructional approach that combines face-to-face (F2F) and online learning. Each class session and learning activity is offered in-person, synchronously online, and asynchronously online. Students can decide how to participate. ^[EDU1]

*Hyflex is arguably a kind of Blended Learning, however the two terms are not interchangeable: while blended is a mix of on-campus, online, asynchronous and synchronous activities, hybrid implies that **every** activity is available in every mode with students able to choose how to engage on a day-by-day basis. For 'face-to-face' and 'in-person' in this definition, read 'on-campus'. Use with caution, and not as a synonym for 'flexible' or 'hybrid'.*

Hybrid Learning

Blended learning and hybrid learning are terms that are used interchangeably by providers when describing different models of delivery which use a mix of methods to engage students in learning. Blended is the more commonly used term of the two and is applied in several different ways to describe different models of delivery and/or student engagement. Hybrid is not as prevalent in the UK higher education sector. ^[QAA2]

Recommend avoiding this term because of its potential confusion with Hyflex.

Lecture

The term 'lecture' covers everything from the traditional model, where a single member of the institution's staff or an affiliate introduces ideas or delivers facts to a group of students, to approaches that might be much more interactive, involve a variety of contributors, make use of a range of media and technologies, and take place virtually as well as in person. Lectures are assumed, in general, to involve larger groups of

When thinking about moving existing material to a blended model, it is sometimes useful to consider a single lecture as comprising multiple

students than do seminars and tutorials but size will vary depending upon the nature of what is being taught, the size of the overall student cohort, and practical concerns. ^[QAA1]

To further refine the QAA definition:

- **Lecture (significant interaction):** a lecture with over two-thirds of the time spent in discussion or on other interactive activities (staff-student or student-student) that are fundamental to the nature of the learning.
- **Lecture (limited interaction):** a lecture where over two thirds of the time is spent on exposition by the lecturer. Interaction with students is typically optional, and is incidental to the main learning (e.g. ad-hoc questions from students, or a short Q&A session at the end).
- **Lecture (moderate interaction):** a lecture that is somewhere between the two previous definitions.

The number of sub-types and associated time divisions used here is somewhat arbitrary, and has been chosen on purely pragmatic grounds to enable internal discussions.

On-campus

The term on campus has the same benefit as in person as it clearly articulates where the learning and teaching activities of a programme will take place, rather than how students and staff will communicate during these activities. It is a term that can also be used to describe how a whole programme will be delivered. This means that it can be used to avoid misunderstandings when certain parts of teaching and learning are directed by staff, but not delivered by them, in person. ^[QAA2]

Online Learning

The term online works well as an umbrella term as it is in common use beyond the UK higher education sector; it focuses on the connectivity of the learning, teaching and support delivery methods that may be employed by a provider. However, it carries with it the connotations that all the learning may be web-based, requiring students to use a connected device in order to access any of the learning, teaching and support activities that are on offer. There is also the suggestion that online can be considered as happening at a physical distance from a provider, when students could be detached from onsite classroom learning. ^[QAA2]

Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS)

Peer Assisted Study Sessions provide an informal environment where students received tailored support and guidance from students in higher years, typically from the same programme of study.

sub-components; e.g. a 'limited interaction' introduction, a 'significant interaction' discussion, and a 'limited interaction' wrap-up.

Note that online learning is not necessarily 'remote' learning; while it may not take place in a classroom, the term applies when students study online in a study space on-campus or in their term-time accommodation etc.

Practical classes and workshops

(also Examples Classes, Problem Classes and Labs)

A session involving the development and practical application of a particular skill or technique. Examples are wide ranging and could include a laboratory class, recital, artefact handling/identification, language conversation, sports match and so on. Practical classes and workshops might incorporate elements of teaching or guided learning, and they are at least likely to be supervised or observed. These sessions are more likely to take place in person but, depending on the nature of the subject, may also be conducted remotely. The size of a practical class or workshop will depend upon the nature of the activity. Workshops are likely to involve at least a small group of students but practical classes could take place on a one-to-one basis. ^[QAA1]

For 'in person' in this definition read 'on campus'.

Project supervision

A meeting with a supervisor, to discuss a particular piece of work. The term 'project supervision' is used to refer to the meetings that a student or group of students would have with a supervisor, to plan, discuss, and monitor progress on a particular piece of work, such as a dissertation or extended project. Meetings can take place virtually or in person. The size of a project supervision meeting will depend upon the number of students involved in the work concerned and the nature of that work but supervisions will frequently also take place on a one-to-one basis. ^[QAA1]

In our context a supervisor may be an academic and / or GTAs / PDRAs.

Seminar

Seminars are defined as sessions that provide the opportunity for students to engage in discussion of a particular topic and/or to explore it in more detail than might be covered in a lecture - the extent of interaction will depend on the delivery method. A typical model would involve a guided, tutor-led discussion in a small group. However, the term also encompasses student or peer-led classes with a staff member or affiliate present. As with lectures, use of technology means seminars may take place virtually. Seminars are assumed in general to involve smaller groups of students than lectures, but size will vary depending upon the nature of what is being taught, the size of the overall student cohort, and practical concerns. ^[QAA1]

Supervised time in studio or workshop

Time in which students work independently but under supervision, in a specialist facility such as a studio or workshop. Examples might include time spent in an art or design studio, or in a rehearsal space such as a workshop theatre. It could be timetabled or take place on an ad hoc basis. Peers as well as staff or affiliates may be involved. Due to the nature of the activity, it is unlikely to take place virtually. Supervised time in a studio/workshop might involve a group or individual. ^[QAA1]

Traditional 

The term 'traditional lectures' or 'traditional teaching' is commonly used (even within the definitions presented here),

Recommend avoiding this term unless accompanied by an

however traditions vary considerably within disciplines and over time.

explicit context-sensitive definition.

Tutorial

A meeting involving one-to-one or small group supervision, feedback or detailed discussion on a particular topic or project. Tutorials may be distinguished from seminars for the stronger emphasis that they place on the role of the tutor in giving direction or feedback. Tutorials can happen virtually as well as face-to-face. ^[QAA1]

For 'face-to-face' read 'on-campus'

Virtual or Digital Learning Environment

Historically a Virtual Learning Environment commonly referred to a single system such as Blackboard, Moodle or Canvas that provided a variety of services including content and grade management. Over time, as third party services have been integrated with the core VLE, and auxiliary services related to teaching and learning provided via single-sign on, the meaning has drifted. In some circumstances it is used to denote the 'core' system; other times to describe the entire ecosystem of tools and services. We propose that 'VLE' be used to refer to the core system (in our case Blackboard), and that the term 'Digital Learning Environment' be used to describe the broader ecosystem.

Work-based learning

Learning that takes place in the workplace. The term covers any learning that takes place through an organised work opportunity, rather than in a university or college setting, and includes managed placements. Some supervision or monitoring is likely to be involved, and may be carried out either by a member of staff or a mentor within the host organisation. Due to the nature of the activity, work-based learning is unlikely to take place virtually. Students might undertake work-based learning individually or in groups, depending on the nature of the workplace and the learning involved. ^[QAA1]

Sources

- QAA1 (2011) Explaining Contact Hours. Available at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/contact-hours-guidance.pdf>
- QAA2 (2020) Building a Taxonomy for Digital Learning. Available at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/building-a-taxonomy-for-digital-learning.pdf>
- WP1: Wikipedia definition of Blended Learning. Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blended_learning
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