

Tech-Flex: Using Time Wisely

With fewer in-seat sessions than a traditional on-campus class, hybrid makes the time that students and their instructor spend together a more precious commodity. As such, greater focus needs to be placed on using that time more purposefully.

Whereas in a traditional classroom, a certain amount (sometimes a significant amount) of in-seat time might be spent watching videos, reading texts, and taking notes during faculty lectures, in a hybrid course, students are more often assigned these kinds of content-centered tasks in the online portion of the course, and spend on-campus time more deeply exploring it, analyzing it, deconstructing it, and collaborating together to develop new ideas.

This kind of teaching approach is similar to what is called the “flipped classroom” model, in which students review video lectures and other resources online on their own, who then come to class ready to go further with what they covered. But the flipped classroom model is not a totally appropriate comparison for the potential of hybrid teaching. The sessions that are designated for online work in a hybrid class are not merely for reviewing material – they are intentionally much more active.

The expectation in a hybrid course, of both students and the instructor, is that in-seat time is more actively used. The question, “Can students do this on their own (alone or in groups)?” becomes a primary consideration in the course planning process, so much so that if students come to class only to be given a read-and-review assignment, they are often irked by what they see as an inadequate use of time, a wasted opportunity.

With the rapid rise of Web 2.0 tools, which focus on user collaboration, sharing of user-generated content, and social networking, the time that students spend online can go far beyond passive reading and watching. Students can actively engage with it and with each other – even create entire projects together – all online.

Of course, as with any course (regardless of format), there must be appropriate time given to both the introduction of new content, as well as opportunities to engage more deeply with it. The possibilities and flexibility that hybrid teaching offers, however, are arguably unmatched by purely online or on-campus courses. The key to taking full advantage of that potential all lies in planning.