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# DEAN'S DIGEST

*"If we teach today's students as we taught yesterdays, we rob them of tomorrow"*

*John Dewey*

## Do you know the difference between hybrid and parallel teaching?

*Since the lockdown of campus in spring 2020, ITU has gained experience with various (digital) teaching formats that have contributed to new ways of teaching & learning. Meanwhile, the variety and disparate use of terminology used to describe the learning strategies and experiences across courses has also been highlighted. In this newsletter, I will introduce a terminology of teaching formats and a guiding principle to help support conversations and alignment of expectations about teaching and learning across ITU. I will also explain why Education Group and Heads of Department recommend that ITU refrains from using online and parallel teaching as default formats.*

### Educational quality should govern the choice of teaching formats

Every day, teachers at ITU plan and conduct teaching that boosts students' academic interest and performance. This includes pedagogical and didactical choices on how to interact with students such as whether activities should be teacher- or student-driven, and whether they should take place online or on-site. Balancing teaching formats to fit students' needs and skills is a key driver of [ITU's thriving learning environment](#). Every teaching situation is unique, but a guiding principle is that educational quality should govern the choice of teaching formats, not the other way around. Thus, the mere availability of hardware and software tools, convenience of teachers, students, or administration, etc. should not decide how and where teaching takes place. With this guiding principle in mind, let's move on to introducing common teaching formats at ITU.

### Teaching formats at ITU

Learning Support (ITU's pedagogical unit) has explored the teaching and learning activities and strategies at ITU both during the lockdown and in the aftermath of the pandemic and compared with the literature on digital teaching formats. They found that ITU across departments and individuals do not use a shared or coherent terminology to describe variations of digital course formats which makes it difficult to have conversations at both practical and strategic level

about quality and digitalization. Consequently, they took the initiative to list and characterize the formats at ITU as listed below.

**On-site teaching** is the most common teaching format at ITU. It takes place on campus with the physical presence of both students and teachers throughout the course. The focus is on the in-person teaching sessions preparing students for the work they do individually or in groups outside of class. **Online teaching**, on the other hand, is characterized by being synchronously and/or asynchronously designed in a fully virtual environment without any planned physical interaction between teachers and students or between the students themselves. Students and teachers became very familiar with online teaching during the full lock-down.

Other teaching formats combine on-site and online activities and other dimensions of teaching in various ways. **Parallel teaching** takes place synchronously in two separate spaces by allowing students to follow the teaching on-site, where the teacher is, or via Zoom from home. The term "hybrid" is often used at ITU to describe formats which are in fact "parallel". **Hybrid teaching** provides a context of learning that challenges divisions between online/offline spaces, teacher/student roles, formal/informal contexts, and other traditionally separable dimensions. For example, students work independently on self-paced e-learning activities supported by the teacher in in-person sessions. In the **blended learning** format, online and on-site teaching and learning activities are systematically integrated and alternated. 'Flipped classroom' is a blended teaching design in which lectures or instructional content are moved outside the classroom to leave room for discussions or other dynamic learning activities during the in-person sessions. [The taxonomy of digital learning & course formats may be visited here.](#)

### Recommended teaching formats

Education Group (Head of SAP, Head of Communication and Dean of Education) and Head of Departments have decided that ***on-site, blended and hybrid teaching should be the default teaching formats at ITU.***

Why do we as management ask teachers to refrain from using online and parallel teaching as default formats? We do this with the guiding principle of educational quality in mind. In most cases, we do not believe that the educational quality is high in a pure online or a parallel setup. In an online setup, engagement between teachers and students and between students is limited and teaching tends to be very teacher-driven. In the parallel format it is very difficult to keep both on-site and online participants engaged and mutually engaging and the learning experience is often depreciated for one of the groups. Having that said, there are also exceptional situations where using these formats may be advantageous.

By having a common teaching format terminology and by stressing what are the default teaching formats at ITU we also hope to align expectations about the teaching situation between teachers and students.

I encourage the whole ITU community to continuously explore new ways of teaching, working, and learning that ensures wellbeing and academic performance for both teachers and students.

I wish you all a good Autumn semester 2022.

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