

Can we see your schedule for a blended learning course?

- **Rebecca Davis:** What does QP stand for?  
QP stands for Qualifying Points. The composition program has a policy stating that students cannot miss more than two weeks worth of class; if they do, they automatically fail the course. This sort of attendance policy poses a challenge in a blended course, where the work we'd normally do in class takes place online. So, when they complete a task in the course (including participating in class), they receive a certain number of QPs. In order to submit their final portfolio at the end of the semester, they must accumulate 90% of those points. I think it's important not to be too concerned about "seat time" equivalents in the online portion (focus on learning objectives instead), but this was the best way I could see to adapt the policy to the blended format.

**Britt Watwood:** Based on your schedule, would you consider this a 50% online blended course?

I would consider it to be about 60% online, since the course would usually meet three times per week. In a totally F2F class, I would typically cancel three weeks of class to hold one-on-one conferences, so I'm considering that time in the schedule to be the equivalent of meeting three times (not just one).

- **FAU Center for eLearning:** could you describe typical assignments due since it looks like 3 assignments a week typically  
I've attached to the email a sample week from my class this semester to give folks an idea of what I do.

**M Jones-Columbus, GA:** How do you balance online activities with face to face? Are there certain subjects where little is online and in others the entire module is to completed online?

Because I teach first-year students, one of my goals is to establish good learning habits, and I think that recursive scheduling helps them in that regard. So, my course looks very similar from week to week. For upper-level or graduate courses, it would be more appropriate to experiment with what subjects or content or goals work better online rather than F2F and vary the schedule. Ultimately, though, it comes down to managing student expectations about the course. If they know from the start that the schedule will be more fluid, then they will perform more successfully in the course.

In my experience, though, these kinds of tasks work better online:

- Discussions that require complex textual analysis
- Sample portfolio evaluation
- Peer review
- Qualitative quizzes
- Content delivery

And these work better F2F:

- Discussions that require complex textual analysis (sound familiar?)
- Analysis of online discussions
- In-class writing and revising
- Small group work
- Peer review follow-up
- Individual and group conferences
- Technology and library orientation

**Catherine Stephens - UW Madison:** Can you elaborate a bit more, how does Blended Learning support your ability to approach teaching and learning in a creative way, as a creative endeavor?

In some ways, you can diffuse a lot of the pressure to “cover” material in the F2F sessions of a blended course and do more interesting activities (and be more creative). For instance, I was able to have students work in groups to capture images on their mobile devices related to advertising around campus. The work we did online prepared students for this task; they had already done so much of the thinking about the text we read that they could then more readily apply it. The example below is one such photo from one of the groups. When they returned from collecting these images, we had an excellent conversation about the relationship between “big business” advertising and the advertising posted by campus coffee shops or students selling guitar lessons. We probably wouldn’t have had that valuable insight without this activity, which was a result of the online work.

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**Cherrlyn:** How can Dylan meet at various times? Other than the once a week? Does he have an assigned room?

UWM doesn't have room-sharing for blended courses like many institutions, out of necessity, do. For English 101, students see that it's a blended course in the schedule of classes, but they don't know precisely on what days we'll be meeting. Other instructors handle the scheduling differently, but I like the flexibility in course design leading up to the beginning of the semester.

**Cherrlyn:** At my campus, someone else wrote the online content, so my issue is making a stronger connection between what's online and what goes on in the F2F session.

The author-instructor model is popular at many institutions, especially for ones that have a high instructor turnover rate. I think that having a course template in these situations can help with quality and consistency of student experience, but yes, it's hard to make that content your own, especially when you are trying to integrate the online and F2F parts of your course (which is very important!). Overall, I find it more difficult to "blend" from F2F to online than the other way around. For example, it's generally easier to continue an online conversation in the F2F environment than vice-versa, so from that perspective, you may be at an advantage, since you'll have a lot of the more difficult and time-consuming work done for you!

**mary taylor:** What are the main advantages to the students for taking a hybrid course? Students tend to take blended courses because they like to "push time." At UWM, our students are very busy. Many of them commute and work and have many competing obligations. The flexibility of deciding when to complete the online work helps them manage their schedules. The courses are no less rigorous; they just work better with students' lives. We also have a parking epidemic on campus, so if a student can avoid coming to campus and spending time or money on parking, then they're pretty happy! While these students might also have the option to take online courses, they also tend to like the F2F interaction that takes place in a blended course. Best of both worlds, as they say.

**Christie-JSCC, Birmingham, AL:** How is your enrollment for hybrid courses? Enrollment for blended courses in the English area of my college tends to be low. How do you encourage blended learning?

In my courses, students are just happy to get into a section of English 101, so sometimes they're not even attracted by the blended format. Funny enough, though, four of my students from last semester have enrolled in a blended English 102 course this semester, so I think once they've had the experience and understand what they're getting into, they are likely to enroll in a blended course again. Perhaps such high-enrollment courses are the low-hanging fruit?

**Barbara G. Tucker Dalton State College:** Yes, I would similarly ask, how is your retention and completion rate?

In my courses, retention and success rate are certainly NO WORSE, and I would say marginally better than in my F2F courses. The courses I teach are capped at 24. I

usually have one or two drop out by the end of the semester and have one (or less) fail due to performance. That said, I think this has less to do with the blended format itself than with having a consistent online presence and reaching out to students when they seem to be slipping. We could do this in a F2F course as well, but there is in some circles a prevailing attitude that students should not be accommodated, that that's not how the "real world" works. Maybe so, but I think we prepare them even less for the real world if they leave the university and don't finish their degrees. Plus, with institutional competition so high, I would caution instructors against the old-school model of saying, on the first day of class: "Look at the person to your left. Look at the person to your right. By the end of the semester, one of the three of you will have failed."

**Kelvin Thompson:** social annotation tool: [www.classroomsalon.org](http://www.classroomsalon.org)  
Definitely worth checking out!

**Paula Thornhill, ULM:** What are the issues that your students experience in the hybrid environment?

Students tend to be confused initially about the scheduling aspect. Many tend to be overcautious about "skipping" a F2F meeting, even though I have reassured them and have scheduled online work that clearly replaces the F2F time. I've even had one student admit that she went to class on a day we didn't meet, "just in case." Otherwise, the issues students face are no different from students in either online or traditional F2F courses: they get sick, their cars break down, they get behind on their work, they don't understand the assignment, etc. Being clear and your expectations really helps in this regard. Also, sticking with simple, supported technologies like your institution's LMS will help reduce the technical difficulties (which is something they do sometimes face as well).

**Guest:** when you are grading your students do you grade them more for their f2f or for their online participation? How do you come up with the assessment?

One thing I've learned from teaching a blended course was how ridiculous my assessment model for participation was when I taught a F2F course. Back then, 20% of the final grade was participation, which I calculated at the very end based on my recollection of their overall participation. I had attendance data to go on as well, but in my blended course, I usually collect some artifact from them before they leave class to get a sense of their engagement that day. I am still required to do holistic grading by the Composition Program at UWM, but this system helps me get a sense of how they performed in the moment.