

Hybrid/Online Classes Frequently Asked Questions

How does the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) define a “hybrid” course?

The THECB (as well as UTRGV’s [“Policy for the Design and Delivery of Distance Education Courses and Programs” document document](#)) uses the term “hybrid” to refer to a course in which at least 50% but less than 85% of the course is “remote” (i.e., occurring when the students and the professor are not in the same physical location). Hybrid courses typically make use of technology such as learning management systems, Zoom or ITV to connect students with the professor online or across locations. They may also make use of asynchronous learning through a learning management system for a portion of the course.

How does THECB define “online” courses?

If more than 85% of the course is completed remotely, using technology that does not require the instructor and student to be in the same location, the course is defined by the THECB as online. Online courses can be synchronous or asynchronous, utilizing course management systems, Zoom, and similar technologies. As with hybrid courses, online courses can require a small portion of the course be completed face-to-face (14% or less), allowing for required face-to-face orientations, testing, etc.

What is a “traditional” or Face-to-Face course?

A traditional or face-to-face course is one where the instructor and the students are in the same physical location. While accreditors and other regulating bodies permit up to 49% of a traditional, face-to-face course to be taught online, this is intended to be an absolute maximum of what is allowed. UTRGV’s – and, more importantly, our students’ – expectation is that traditional courses will be delivered in person with a minimal number of class sessions offered in an online or alternate modality for pedagogically appropriate reasons.

How does the THECB define distance education?

A distance education course is any course in which the instructor and the students are not in the same physical location for more than 50% of the time. Both hybrid and online courses, then, are considered distance education courses under this definition.

Can face-to-face courses include some remote work?

Yes, based on the current definitions, face-to-face/traditional courses can include up to 49% remote work. It is important to keep in mind, however, that students who enroll in a face-to-face course are expecting the vast majority of classes to be face-to-face.

My course is being offered in multiple sections and only one section is hybrid or online. Is the course considered distance education?

For reporting purposes, if any section of a course is offered hybrid/online, then the course is considered to have been offered as a distance education course even if all other sections of the course are offered face-to-face. The course would be counted in the percentage of the program available via distance education and may require additional reporting to THECB and/or SACSCOC.

Course Modality Definitions	
Modality	Definition
Face-to-Face	0%-49% of class meetings are conducted online or at a distance
Hybrid	50%-84% of class meetings are conducted synchronously or asynchronously online or at a distance
Online	85%-100% of class meetings are conducted synchronously or asynchronously online or at a distance
AOP	100% of class meetings are offered synchronously or asynchronously online in an accelerated format (two terms per traditional semester)
Program Modality Definitions	
Modality	Definition
Face-to-Face	0% to 49% of courses in the program are offered synchronously or asynchronously at a distance
Hybrid	50%-84% of courses in the program are conducted synchronously or asynchronously online or at a distance
Online	85%-100% of courses in the program are conducted synchronously or asynchronously online or at a distance
AOP	100% of the courses in the program are offered synchronously or asynchronously in an accelerated format

The THECB definitions for hybrid and online courses seem overly broad/general given today's technology. Are they under review?

Yes. The THECB definitions are more than twenty years old. A THECB committee is in the process of revising and updating its definitions to provide more focused categories and better reflect today's educational reality.

How and when are hybrid/online courses reported to the THECB?

Each semester UTRGV submits a course report to the THECB. This report identifies every course taught during the semester along with its mode of delivery. This report is prepared by SAIR using data available in Banner.

How and when are hybrid/online courses reported to SACSCOC?

Programs/colleges track the number of hybrid/online courses offered as part of each degree plan. In the semester before the program will reach the threshold of 49% of coursework required for the degree hybrid/online, they notify the SACSCOC liaison who formally reports this to SACSCOC as a letter of notification.

My class is a hybrid class. What can I do?

Hybrid classes are those for which 50%-84% of the scheduled class meetings are online/remote. At least 16% of class meetings must be held face to face.

Can I change the modality of my face-to-face course?

The decision to change the modality of a course is not solely at the individual faculty member's discretion. Change in modality may trigger reporting requirements if your program is not already approved as a distance education program. Course modality changes must be reviewed by the college to ensure the change does not require additional reporting or external approval. All approved course modality changes must be completed through the university's process for changing courses so that the official record accurately reflects mode of delivery.

What happens if I get sick?

Illnesses can occur at any time and may require time away from the classroom. Faculty should follow institutional procedures for reporting illness and requesting accommodations. If schedule changes become necessary as a result of documented illness and approved accommodations, faculty should communicate changes to students in a timely manner. Any decision to change mode of delivery must be reviewed and approved through the college and completed through the university's process so that the official record accurately reflects mode of delivery for each course.

As a reminder, faculty should have statements in their syllabi regarding what students should do if they are sick, accommodations that may be available for students, what will happen if faculty get sick but can work remotely, what will happen if faculty are unable to teach as a result of illness.

What do we need to do if we want to begin offering our program entirely online or hybrid?

When program faculty make the decision to offer a program online or hybrid and want to advertise the program as such, the program needs to go through the college and institutional review and approval processes so that the catalog accurately reflects the program delivery method. Moving a program to online or hybrid modality also requires external notification/approval to both the THECB and SACSCOC.

We have been offering our program in both online/hybrid and face-to-face modalities. What do we need to do if we want to stop offering the program in one of these modality options?

If a program has been approved for multiple delivery modes and wants to eliminate a modality, the change needs to go through the college and institutional review and approval processes so that the catalog accurately reflects the change in delivery method. As part of the elimination of a delivery method, the program will be required to submit a teach-out plan for the modality being eliminated. Students who are enrolled in that delivery method must be given the opportunity to complete the program in the delivery method in which they are enrolled. UTRGV is required to notify both THECB and SACSCOC if we eliminate a delivery method and to provide the teach out plan demonstrating that students, faculty, and staff will not be adversely affected by the change.