



## Stellenbosch University: Modes of delivery

Although higher education institutions in South Africa are registered to offer either full-contact or distance-learning programmes, the Department of Higher Education and Training has recognised a growing convergence in how institutions are presenting their programmes and utilising information and communication technology (ICT). Since Stellenbosch University (SU) is registered as a full-contact institution, the teaching and learning strategy for each programme and module must reflect that we adhere to the expected contact time required for contact/blended-learning programmes.

### Useful/important terminology

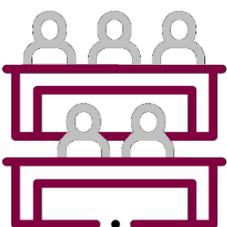
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| <b>Minimum requirements for programmes</b> | Undergraduate programmes on NQF levels 5 to 7: At least 30% of the <u>notional hours</u> must be offered via synchronous activities (face-to-face or digitally assisted).   |
|  | Postgraduate programmes on NQF level 8 (honours or PGDip): At least 25% of the <u>notional hours</u> must be offered as synchronous activities.   |
|  | Postgraduate programmes on NQF levels 9 and 10 (master's and doctoral): No minimum synchronous contact requirements   |
| <b>Notional learning hours</b>             | The estimated learning time taken by the <i>average student</i> to achieve the specified learning outcomes of the module or programme. This is not a precise measure, but indicates the amount of study and degree of commitment expected. Each credit represents <i>ten notional hours</i> , i.e. a ten-credit module is equal to 100 notional hours.  |
| <b>Asynchronous learning</b>               | Occurs when students engage with learning material or activities at their own pace, from different locations and at different times. Such learning usually takes place via a digitally mediated platform. Students are provided with learning units, which they then complete as their schedules permit.  |
| <b>Synchronous learning</b>                | Implies that the students and lecturer(s)/tutor(s) engage with one another and the course content in a specific space at the same time, whether face-to-face or virtually, i.e. through livestreaming of lectures, or an online meeting in a virtual chatroom. <i>Synchronous online activities</i> are also regarded as 'contact time', as the interaction between student and lecturer/tutor occurs at the same time. |

### Modes of delivery

A mode of delivery refers to the instruction method. Traditionally, teaching in higher education involves lectures presented to large groups of students, accompanied by tutorials and workshops, with some independent study. However, emerging technologies have presented several other modes of delivery, which can be very effective. The mode of delivery is an important consideration in designing learning activities that would help students develop the skills, knowledge and understanding required to achieve the intended module and programme outcomes. The choice of delivery mode for a programme might also be influenced by the specific student profile. Nevertheless, irrespective of the mode of delivery, the principles and criteria for teaching and learning at SU, as stated in the *Teaching and Learning Policy*, apply, as do the principles of the *DeLTA framework*.

#### Face-to-face (F2F)/full-contact learning

The course is offered in a physical classroom or facility, with lecturers/facilitators and students all present in person. Summative assessments predominantly occur in brick-and-mortar facilities. Most of the teaching, learning and assessment is facilitated on campus or in the classroom. Face-to-face (F2F) learning and teaching is the format in which the majority of SU's courses are currently offered to full-time students. F2F learning allows for different teaching and learning methodologies to be used, and may involve a *blend* of traditional classroom methods and online interaction.





## Blended learning (BL)

At SU, blended learning (BL) refers to the pedagogically sound utilisation of digital learning technologies, integrated with a variety of learning and teaching methodologies. As an overarching pedagogical approach, BL can be applied in both conventional face-to-face and hybrid learning contexts. It allows for a combination of synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (self-paced) learning. BL retains the best features of F2F, which it combines with appropriate online engagement to enrich and support students' learning experience. For a BL offering still to be regarded as a *contact* programme, it must adhere to the [minimum requirements](#) for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, as described above.



## Fully online learning (FOL)

With fully online learning (FOL), also known as *distance education*, the bulk of the course is offered via digital technology. Students spend only 30% or fewer of their [notional learning hours](#) in the conventional F2F mode of delivery. Therefore, most of the teaching and learning interactions are [asynchronous](#). This mode allows students to engage with learning material at different times and locations.

*Note:* SU is **not** accredited to offer fully online programmes. The fully online programme offering during the COVID-19 pandemic (or *emergency remote teaching*) was an exception made for all higher education institutions.



## Emergency remote teaching, learning and assessment

### Understanding the difference between emergency remote teaching, learning and assessment, and (fully) online teaching, learning and assessment

The global COVID-19 crisis has caused several major changes in higher education within an exceptionally short period of time. At SU, as at most other institutions, the sudden suspension of on-campus activities to curb the spread of the virus resulted in a rapid shift to a fully online delivery mode. Yet it is important to note that online teaching, learning and assessment during a time of crisis and the conventional development of fully online courses are two different approaches. Nevertheless, the one could feed into the other: Building on the new knowledge we gained and the practices and approaches we developed during the crisis could pave the way for sensible and sustainable blended, hybrid or fully online engagement in the future. The lessons learnt during this period could also influence possible shifts in our F2F offering going forward.

One of the key aspects of an emergency remote learning period is the need to adapt course content that was originally designed as face-to-face or blended-learning material to a fully online format. To this end, academics mostly make use of mainstream collaborative tools that are either institutionally supported or have become popular due to the global demand for online collaboration and learning (e.g. Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Adobe Connect). Given the urgency of the shift to emergency remote teaching, learning and assessment, academics have very little time to explore and pilot a variety of tools, and to carefully ascertain whether the various tools' features are well aligned with the intended learning outcomes. As a result, academics tend to rely on readily available, institutionally recommended digital technologies.

Despite various forms of support and guidance, academics might still feel pressured to produce quick solutions to pressing and unexpected issues as they arise. Professional support staff, in turn, do not normally have the luxury of slowly and carefully considering, and taking full advantage of, all aspects of a multifaceted online course design process. Instead, support staff will likely limit the range of digital tools and platforms they recommend. At SU, they would probably advocate for the institutional learning management system SUNLearn, as the institution has already established the necessary professional learning and technical support mechanisms associated with this system.

In addition, instead of being encouraged to explore novel digital approaches, academics will likely be presented with more conservative, lower-tech options, which pose a less steep learning curve for them to master. Furthermore, academics will likely be recommended to consider a simplified, consistent approach to online teaching, learning and assessment, and to aim to limit the cognitive load for students that are not versed in primarily self-paced, fully online learning. Despite the nature of such a modality, all role players will be encouraged to be guided by the institutional Teaching and Learning Policy.



### Hybrid Learning (HL)

HL is an emerging mode of delivery at SU underpinned by good design according to the [DeLTA](#) framework and guided by the [Teaching and Learning Policy](#). An academic programme or module delivered in HL will involve shorter periods of on-campus (F2F) teaching and learning (*block contact sessions*), supplemented with sustained periods of fully online learning.

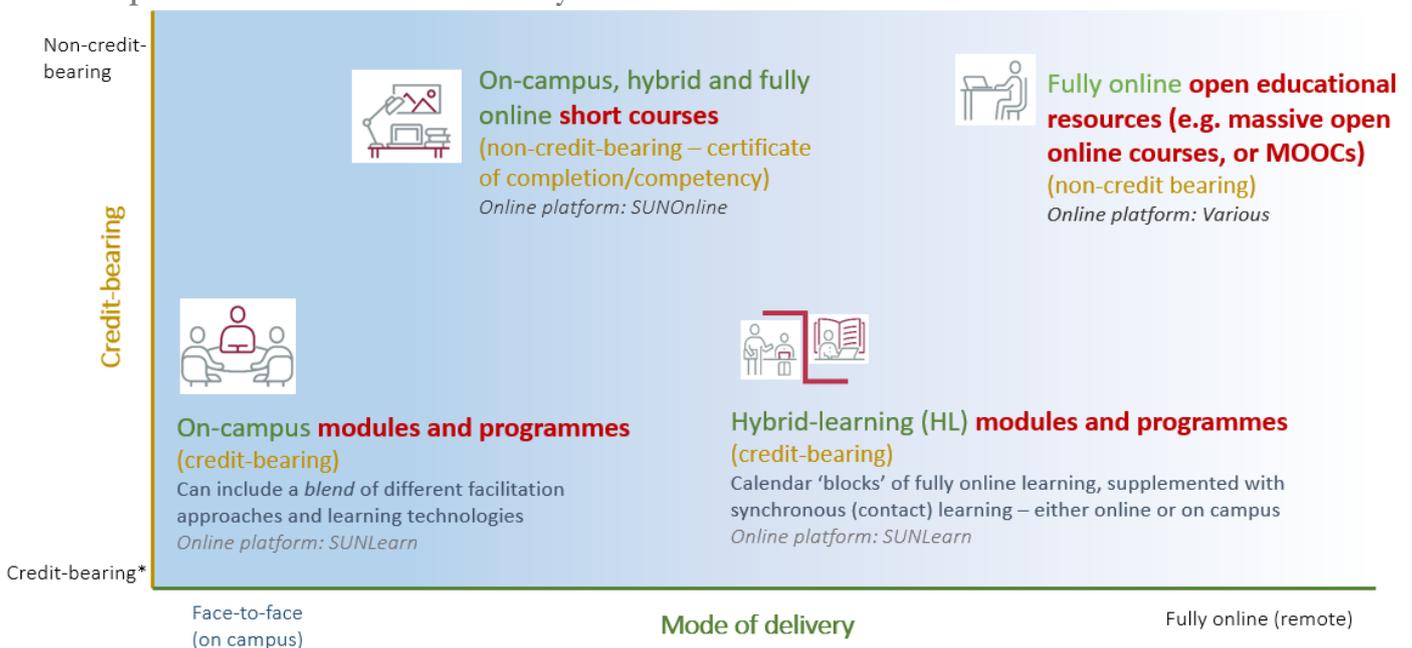
Students may engage in a number of shorter, focused F2F sessions (e.g. a week at a time) on campus, followed/preceded by longer periods of online learning. The calendar 'blocks' of fully online learning will likely consist of the following:

- **Predominantly asynchronous learning**, during which students access digitally archived learning material (such as pre-recorded videos, narrated PowerPoint tutorials and online reading material) and engage with self-paced online activities (such as practice quizzes or forum discussions).
- **Some synchronous** online activities (such as webinars and other real-time / "live" interaction between students and lecturers)

Assessments could consist of a combination of invigilated tests/examinations in distributed assessment centres, and online assessments. It is recommended that the HL strategy of each module take cognisance of the minimum required synchronous teaching and learning hours, and that an HL strategy be included in the teaching and learning strategy for the relevant programme (i.e. when and how block contact sessions would be offered, similar synchronous activities across all modules, etc.).

Programmes may be offered either full-time or part-time to provide for students who are unable to study full-time. For example, an honours programme of 120 credits (1 200 notional hours) would usually be offered over one academic year. A part-time offering of the same programme would enable students to complete it over two years (i.e. 60 credits in the first year and another 60 in the second year).

### Visual representation of different delivery modes



\*Minimum contact time required (contact time = synchronous learning, i.e. real-time engagement - F2F or online)

# The types of hybrid learning (HL) offerings at Stellenbosch University, and the rationale behind each



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|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>HL programme</b>                  | <p>Programmes may be offered either full-time or part-time to provide for students who are unable to study full-time.</p> <p>For example, an honours programme of 120 credits (1 200 notional hours) would usually be offered over one academic year. A part-time offering of the same programme would enable students to complete it over two years (i.e. 60 credits in the first year and another 60 in the second year).</p>  |
| <b>HL elective module</b>            | <p>It is possible to change the delivery mode of an existing elective module to HL, or to generate a completely new HL module, which is to be offered as an elective within a programme or number of programmes. Typically, the goal would be twofold, namely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allow more students to enrol for a module; and</li> <li>• ensure that the module is available to occasional students (e.g. a lifelong learning module or holistic student development opportunity).</li> </ul>  |
| <b>HL compulsory module</b>          | <p>To allow for more flexibility in a particular F2F programme, the delivery mode of one or more compulsory modules offered in a specific programme may be changed to HL.</p> <p>Note: The teaching and learning strategy and HL strategy for the programme must be considered, as well as the potential (positive and/or negative) impact the HL offering of the module would have on the flow of the programme as a whole.</p> <p>When applying for HL funding, a full financial viability template should be completed for each programme in which the compulsory module will be offered to ascertain the impact of the HL module on the enrolment targets of the programme(s). (In this case, it would be essential to keep the minimum synchronous contact time in mind.)</p> |
| <b>HL further-opportunity module</b> | <p>A further-opportunity module offers the same content as a gatekeeper or hurdle module (see below) and is also offered in the same academic year. Yet the key intended outcome of such a separate HL ‘version’ of the module is to afford students another flexible opportunity to complete their degree without having to register for another academic year.</p>   |
| <b>HL learning unit</b>              | <p>HL learning units can be an effective way to share foundational knowledge or establish prior knowledge before commencing with the rest of the course. This approach works well in an asynchronous mode. Learning units may be integrated with various modules or be offered as supplementary material to students.</p>  |
| <b>Gatekeeper module</b>             | <p>A gatekeeper module is a module that students need to complete to progress to a next module.</p>  |
| <b>Hurdle module</b>                 | <p>A hurdle module is a module with a low success rate. The terms <i>hurdle</i> and <i>gatekeeper</i> are often used interchangeably.</p>  |
| <b>Occasional student</b>            | <p>An occasional student is a student who is registered for non-degree purposes, but wishes to pursue an academic interest in the form of a specific module/modules. These students register to complete the identified module(s) only, and not a qualification, yet they will still receive an academic transcript. These students must still meet the prerequisites for the modules they are interested in. The academic record can be used to show that requirements have been met for ensuing modules or subsequent studies, or for credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) in respect of future qualifications.</p>  |

## References:

The following sources may be consulted in the curriculum development of HL or blended learning offerings:

- [Higher Education Qualification Sub-framework](#)
- [Designing Learning, Teaching and Assessment \(DeLTA\) process](#)
- [SU Teaching and Learning Policy](#)