Hybrid teaching in Aalto University

Hybrid teaching is an increasingly relevant topic at Aalto University, but sometimes it is unclear what is meant by hybrid teaching, and how it should be implemented. This quick guide gives an overview of hybrid teaching, as well as tips for equipment and spaces available at Aalto. The fastest way to get started is by checking through the checklist below.

Checklist for hybrid teaching

Before the hybrid session

1. Reflect, on whether a hybrid model is certainly the best alternative available to support students learning. Support for decision-making can be asked from digital pedagogy specialists.
2. Check, that the room booked for your teaching is labeled "lecture capture" from the booking.aalto.fi service. You can see the room equipment listed there.
3. Reserve enough time for planning the structure and schedule carefully.
4. If needed, ask your school for audiovisual equipment to borrow, or make use of Aalto Takeout’s equipment.
5. Test the implementation of your session before, if possible.
6. Ask students to register or otherwise inform you whether they will be present on-campus or online. For this, you can use for example the Choice activity found in MyCourses. During eg. Covid restrictions, make sure you know how many people are allowed in the space.
7. Inform the students about room details and online participation links as early as possible.

During the hybrid session

1. At the beginning of the session, check that all the participants (on-campus and online) are able to see and hear each other and that your screen sharing is functioning.
2. Describe the structure and practicalities of the hybrid session, and instruct how to ask for speaking turns, comments or questions both online and on-campus.

What is hybrid teaching?

Hybrid teaching is the third option between traditional on-campus and online teaching. In this context, by hybrid teaching we mean teaching situations or sessions, where simultaneously some students or teachers are present online while some are present physically. A course that involves hybrid teaching, can naturally also contain fully online or fully on-campus teaching-based sections.

A related concept to hybrid teaching is blended learning or blended teaching, which means a course that contains both face-to-face and online mediated learning and interaction. Blended learning can also refer to a learning session where digital tools are made use of with students who are physically present. Thus, blended learning is not the same thing as hybrid teaching, but they are closely related.

Teaching in a hybrid manner is not going to replace fully online or on-campus teaching or blended learning that combines these two. Hybrid teaching is one more option to use to have more flexibility in teaching and studying.

When to use hybrid teaching?

Hybrid teaching usually demands more effort from the teacher than purely online or on-campus teaching. Because of this, it is wise to use hybrid teaching only when it really adds value to learning. With good equipment and basic skills mastered, hybrid teaching enriches teaching and helps utilize different possibilities of interaction present and online.

One key value of hybrid teaching is the flexibility it gives to the student. The student can based on their preferences and situation choose whether to participate physically on-site or online. This way, students who for example live further away, work full time, or suffer from illness are given the possibility to participate fully online while those who prefer on-campus learning are given the option to do so.

Hybrid teaching is a good format when a course has multiple teachers or teaching assistants. Together, managing multiple channels and tools is considerably easier. It is also possible to give hybrid teaching on one’s own. In that case, the preparations need to be done extra carefully, so that everything will function as expected during the session.

Example structure of hybrid teaching

Hybrid teaching means all kinds of teaching, where participation is simultaneously made possible both physically present on-campus and digitally online.

One typical example is a lecture given in a lecture hall, streamed live online using for example a built-in lecture capture camera.
Example structure of a hybrid session:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher does</th>
<th>On-campus participants do</th>
<th>Online participants do</th>
<th>Equipment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>Open the session: The teacher describes the goals and practicalities for the session.</td>
<td>Listen and see the presentation on the lecture space screen</td>
<td>Teams, PowerPoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sparking up interest</td>
<td>Gives an interest-sparking questionnaire on Presemo, shares the link via Teams</td>
<td>Open up Presemo on a mobile device</td>
<td>Presemo, Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing a spark-up exercise</td>
<td>Asks for comments and chairs the discussion in the room and via Teams</td>
<td>Comments on the exercise, and listen to others’ comments in the room and via speakers</td>
<td>Room microphone (Jabra, Catchbox, etc.), Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting the key topic</td>
<td>Gives a presentation on the topic using PowerPoint</td>
<td>Listen and see the presentation on the lecture space screen</td>
<td>Teams, PowerPoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group activity</td>
<td>Groups students in the classroom and starts breakout rooms on Teams</td>
<td>Discusses with their group in the room</td>
<td>Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summing up group work</td>
<td>Asks for comments from the groups and chairs the discussion in the room and via Teams. Takes notes on a digital whiteboard.</td>
<td>Comments on the group discussion, and listen to others’ comments in the room and via speakers</td>
<td>Room microphone (Jabra, Catchbox, etc.), Teams, digital whiteboard (Flinga, Teams whiteboard, Jamboard, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing and feedback</td>
<td>Session closure: The teacher sums up the session take-home message and describes what follows. Collects instant feedback via eg. Presemo: What worked, what didn’t work, what remained unclear?</td>
<td>Listen to and asks if something is unclear, gives instant feedback on a mobile device</td>
<td>Teams, Presemo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to engage students in hybrid teaching?

Give clear and consistent instructions for both online and in-class participants, so that everyone knows what to expect. You can for example tell how questions can be asked (via chat or virtual ‘raised hand’ etc.) or how possible group work will be carried out.

Allow students to choose how they participate in teaching. If the classroom capacity is limited due to eg. Epidemic restrictions, you can collect registrations for in-class participation. For example, the MyCourses Choice activity can be utilized in this.

Consider options to promote fellowship and teaming up between the in-class and online students. You can for example ask for students’ wishes via polls, and every now and then confirm that everyone can hear you and are participating. You can also try brief group exercises, that foster social connection. If the groups contain both online and on-campus students, make sure the on-campus members have at least one device that allows joining the online group.

Hybrid teaching tools and spaces

Integrated AV-equipment in classrooms / studios

At the Aalto University campus, you can find over 90 lecture capture spaces. Lecture capture space means that space is equipped with one or multiple video screens, video camera(s), wireless microphone(s), speakers, and AV-computer with applications like Panopto video recording, Zoom, and Teams installed. In many cases, this equipment is applicable to be used also for hybrid classroom teaching. Check and test the space beforehand, though.

- Open the Aalto space booking system Asio. Open more options by clicking “Filter by accessories”. Choose "Lecture Capture". If you wish, you can filter by building or other features as well.
- How Lecture Capture spaces are equipped: Spaces are equipped with multiple displays or projectors, video camera, loudspeakers and wireless microphones, all of which are connected to an AV-computer that has Panopto, Zoom and Teams installed.
- Practice setting up a session with an online simulator of the classroom AV-system called “Snowflake”. (Try a different web browser if one does not work).

Bring your own device

Aalto Takeout lends different equipment for free for all Aalto staff (ARTS operated service, ARTS needs are prioritized). For a hybrid session, consider for example the following equipment:

- External USB Webcam: https://takeout.aalto.fi/607641
- Smartphone grip: https://takeout.aalto.fi/613895
- Light tripod for the phone grip or external webcam: https://takeout.aalto.fi/606739
- Speakerphone: https://takeout.aalto.fi/608843 or https://takeout.aalto.fi/50675
Bringing your own devices with you to a hybrid classroom is also possible. Read the case of how to set up a hybrid session with Zoom by following these steps: https://wiki.aalto.fi/display/OPIT/Zoom#expand-Case1Onlineandinpersonlecturesimultaneously.

In case your institution or school has funding reserved for this, you can also buy equipment through Aalto IT Orders.

What type of support is available for setting up hybrid teaching?

Consult a digital learning specialist

Aalto Digital Learning Environments team supports planning and implementing hybrid teaching, especially before and at the beginning of a session. Contact your school’s digital pedagogy specialist, whose contact information you can find on Aalto.fi. Or book a meeting with a specialist from Book a session with a specialist service.

Specialists serve you with planning hybrid sessions and finding the best suitable practices, tools, and spaces for these sessions. If you want, you can also ask a specialist to join you in the first 15 minutes of the first hybrid session to support and observe.

Technical support in teaching spaces

Aalto IT End User Support (EUS) and Aalto Lobby Services support with technical problems and questions related to the equipment of classrooms. Find Aalto IT and Aalto Lobby Services’ contact information from a classroom, usually on the front desk.

New – Hybrid Teaching Studio

Among other spaces that support hybrid and online teaching, the new Hybrid Teaching Studio (Otakaari 1, U134a) is built and ready to be tested. If you want to test it, please send an e-mail to mycourses@aalto.fi and request a time for an introduction. The same space will also function as a showroom for other teaching technology.

Other applicable spaces

After gaining some experience in pilot spaces, good practices are applied to the new spaces, as they are renovated. Similar classrooms as the Hybrid Teaching Studio can be found already at Otakaari 4 (Kone 1) building, 201, 202, and 317 are worth checking out.