



GUIDELINES ON COURSES TEACHING METHODS

Foreword

Within a framework of policies and provisions on teaching matters that are set out by the QA system, this paper aims to set out in full teaching activities that avail themselves of digital resources and methods, whose adoption has been enhanced and accelerated by the recent pandemic emergency. These guidelines have therefore to be intended as a frame where professor's freedom and autonomy in his or her teaching activity remains essential.

The University of Trieste encourages a teaching approach that focuses on interaction with students, takes advantage of the local environment, promotes connection with research activities. After all, recent experiences have shown and made evident how physical distances may be significantly reduced by technological resources that reinforce inclusive teaching power. It follows that in-person teaching should be integrated by forms of distance learning, which require as uniform guidelines as possible for their use, within a continuous search for innovation and quality improvement.

Regulations

Before summarizing the regulatory framework on online or telematic forms of teaching, it is essential to mention the concept of "blended" learning, which has been used with various meanings and was previously used to indicate the current "mixed" form. On the other hand, in recent pandemic emergency, blended learning has been meant in a different way, as referring to a "parallel" form of learning that implies students' simultaneous online and in-person presence. Moreover, it is worth remembering that, in general, the concept of blended learning, which cannot easily be confined into a strict definition, concerns all those learning activities that "support" in-person activities or which are anyhow in direct contact with students and those autonomous and collaborative learning activities, guided or not by a professor and carried out in different contexts, typically on digital platforms. On a regulatory level, online forms of teaching have been established by Italian Ministerial Decree no. 635/2016 (Annex 3) and Ministerial Decree no. 989/2019 (Annex 3). In particular, Ministerial Decree no. 989 defines the following four types of study courses delivered in telematic mode:

- a) Conventional courses: taught courses entirely delivered in-person, that is other than practical and laboratory activities that envisage limited telematic learning activity, in a proportion not exceeding one tenth of the total;*
- b) Courses delivered in mixed form: study courses that include a significant number of teaching activities delivered online, to an extent not exceeding two thirds of the learning activities;*
- c) Courses mainly delivered by distance learning: study courses delivered mainly by telematic formats, to an extent exceeding two thirds of the learning activities;*

d) Courses entirely delivered by distance learning: in these courses, all learning activities are carried out in telematic form; it is understood that exams and final tests should be carried out in-person.

It should be noted that these definitions refer to a whole course of study, while it is not regulated in what extent and how one single course may adopt online formats. Online formats have been clarified in 2017 ANVUR guidelines and in Annex C of Italian Ministerial Decree no. 6/2019 where they differ in:

- **provided teaching (didattica erogativa)**: method of online teaching as video lectures delivered by a professor in charge of a course (with the possibility of using video lectures or open courses from other universities);
- **interactive teaching (didattica interattiva)**: teaching method of a course delivered online as *e-tivity* and interactive and collaborative activities (e.g.: interactive videoconferencing, assignments, works in team, learning assessments, etc.).

It should be pointed out that telematic teaching activities only concern asynchronous forms of teaching integrated with interactive activities.

Therefore, they do not include distance teaching activities in synchronous format.

The University of Trieste mainly offers courses in conventional or mixed format.

For the purposes of these guidelines the following definitions concerning telematic teaching methods will be set out:

- **provided teaching (didattica erogativa)**: it refers to asynchronous distance lectures;
- **interactive teaching (didattica interattiva)**: it contributes to define digital integrated teaching activities and it comprises all “blended” teaching forms.

Both these formats contribute to design **teaching activities** that may be defined “**increased teaching**”, which means an increase in learning opportunities. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the maximum extent within which courses or part of them can be delivered, corresponds to the value in CFUs assigned to each course, which may be duly defined in teaching activities’ regulations of each course of study, in the part relating to individual study and interaction with professors.

Course teaching methods

Course teaching methods that we intend to suggest through these Guidelines are listed below.

However, indications on how to run exams should be clearly expressed in the related **Syllabus**, so they should be both coherent with learning plan and teaching activities’ Regulations of the course of study; moreover, they should be duly emphasized in academic calendars.

In any case course teaching methods should comply with the existing Regulatory of the University of Trieste and, namely the “Regulations on academic duties of faculty and researchers” and, where requested, they should be approved by Departmental Boards.

To all following teaching formats, courses of study should assign a value in hours per CFU corresponding to the part of assisted teaching activities (i.e. without the number of hours per CFU dedicated to individual study) that has to be uniform for the whole course of study, but can be diversified for each single format.

Conventional face-to-face lectures

Conventional face-to-face lectures take place in-person and foresee the achievement of the learning outcomes as indicated in Syllabus, according to formats autonomously adopted by professors. They may include the use of classic blackboard, presentations, multimedia tools and all teaching tools deemed appropriate. For faculty staff they are calculated in lecture hours that correspond to academic hours (1 academic hour = 45 minutes).

They can be delivered online in a number that the total number of these activities not exceeds the limit established by the regulations on the basis of the course type.

It is preferable that the adoption of telematic formats concerns interactive modes (integrated digital teaching activities). In-person face-to-face lectures may be recorded and become asynchronous distance lectures (see dedicated paragraph). Moreover, they may be delivered through a simultaneous connection with students present online, provided that activity is mainly organized and run for students on site.

This inclusive teaching format may be adopted according to University recommendations and addresses mainly to specific groups of students who are permanently or temporarily in such conditions that prevent them to attend lectures in-person, as: students with special needs, working students; student athletes; adult students or student parents; students in prison.

In these cases, it should be specified that lectures address to students present in classroom, so that remote connection does not substitute in-person lecture both for the type of lecture and the number of students present online.

Adoption of inclusive formats and increased access to teaching activities, such as recordings of lectures and/or simultaneous in-person and online teaching, should be the same at least at the study course level. There being no unanimous decisions taken by the Study Board, single professors may still adopt them, provided that they agreed it with the Board. This is without prejudice to higher decisions taken at the University level. Remote connection can also be used to allow the participation of other professors for seminar-based activities within face-to-face lectures, according to terms and conditions allowed by Study Courses or Departments.

Laboratory activities

Laboratory activities take place in properly **equipped** classrooms or spaces and they can be technical and scientific, IT, linguistic or otherwise oriented at practical application of knowledge acquired.

Laboratory activities can be organised in **groups** of students to facilitate learning and, where capacity of spaces or availability of dedicated equipment are not sufficient, can envisage **repetitions** of the same experiences.

The quantified **hours** for professors correspond to the effective hours completed by students, including any repetitions.

Where digital equipment allows it and activity type is compatible, it is possible to carry out laboratory activities online. It should be pointed out that if online form is a provided teaching, this is possible only if Study Courses are delivered in “mixed form” or “mainly or totally online”, according to the regulations in force, so, hours carried out through this format contribute to the maximum delivered by the whole Study Course. If, on the other hand online format is interactive (integrated digital teaching), hours completed through this form may be carried out in conventional Study Courses as well, although within fixed limits.

External activities

External activities are considered all those learning activities specifically connected with course learning outcomes (such as, for example, excursions, guided tours, city and extra-city visits), which are carried out, according to professor’s instructions, in places other than the University premises, and which can be considered as teaching activities.

They can be dedicated to **groups** of students and repeated as laboratory activities.

Hours dedicated to face-to-face lectures within this form of teaching are calculated in the same way as hours completed by students.

Distance learning in synchronous mode

These lectures are comparable to conventional face-to-face lessons, but they are carried out with all students present in **remote form**; therefore, they have to follow appropriate operating methods and interactions.

Available digital tools have to guarantee this way of **interaction** with students.

Quantification of hours for professors is the same of conventional lessons.

In general, these teaching modes can be adopted following **University provisions** and in specific contexts or emergency situations.

In particular, for **First and Second Cycle degree courses** they can be adopted only in specific conditions and following University provisions. As a general indication it is possible to deliver lectures in synchronous mode, upon decision of Department or Departments involved, only for optional courses that do not include laboratory or external activities, in those cases where it is not possible to resolve the overlap of timetables with other courses in the academic calendars.

For other **third Cycle** learning programs and courses, these teaching modes can be adopted upon decision of Department involved or Authority in charge.

Distance learning in asynchronous mode

These **video-lectures** are **recorded** by professor in two modes:

specially recorded lectures as foreseen by teaching mode and Syllabus of the course:

- they may be integral part of the program and concern, for example, consolidated or basic topics;
- they can be forms of integrated teaching activity to support the course;
- this type of lessons does not have to exceed 30 minutes length and a suggested average length of 15-20 minutes;

recorded lessons during **in-person lectures**: these are recordings made during in-person conventional lectures that may be made available according to times and terms established by the University (see recordings).

If the asynchronous video-lectures are integral part of the course program, they contribute to the online course session and have to be counted differently as far as professor's and student's workload is concerned, because professor can register them only during his or her first year of recording.

Blended activities (integrated online teaching activities)

Integrated online teaching activities are the set of all those innovative activities that aim to constitute an integration between physical and digital classroom; they can be included in the framework of "blended" teaching, which should be promoted in a coordinated effort within Study Courses.

These activities may be carried out within conventional lectures or laboratory activities as an integral part (**interactive** online form), but they can also constitute forms of learning activities which support conventional lectures (**integrated** teaching activities).

They can be taken, according to their type, in synchronous or asynchronous mode and usually by **digital** platforms or tools.

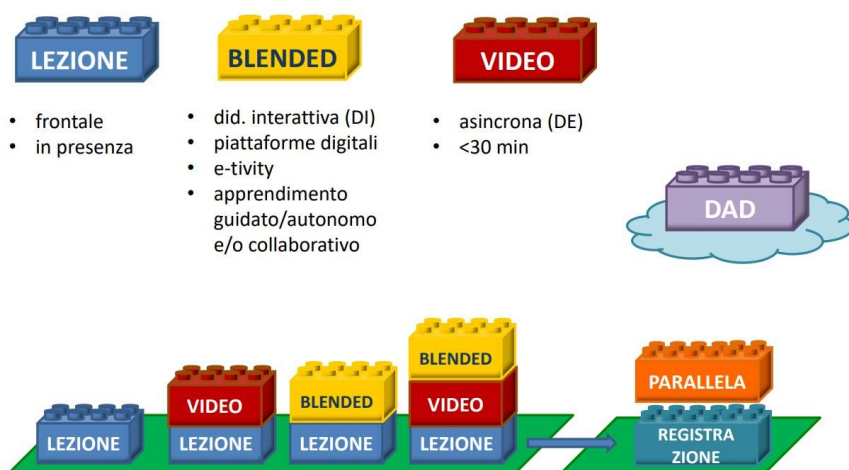
For example, they include:

- professor's or tutor's activities as explanations, advices or demonstrations by faq, mailing lists, webforum, chat, etc.
- auto-learning activities presented by professor in collaboration with students as well, in the form of questionnaires or ongoing tests, with possible final assessment

- online activities (e-tivity) specifically prepared “in form of report, exercises, case study, problem solving, web quest, project, artefact production (or similar)”, which may be individual or in group work products, with related feedback
- definition of spaces of discussion and cooperative learning, as web forum, blog, mailing lists, etc.
- distance auto-learning activities through availability of different digital tools (audio, video, digital texts, online sources, etc.) on dedicated platforms;
- in-person interaction activities through tools of involvement (quiz, questionnaires, interactive questions) that use specific digital platforms.

For this purpose, the University makes some platforms available as Moodle, Teams and Wooclap.

The concept of flexibility and innovation in the definition of a face-to-face teaching activity is outlined in figure below.



Digital tools

Types of digital tools and platform

Where the provision of training activities through digital tools or platforms is required or expected, it is **necessary** to use tools made available by University.

The tool adopted by the University for remote lectures (in synchronous and asynchronous form) is Microsoft Teams (MS Teams), which allows to deliver remote lessons and video recordings; this tool is present in University MS Office365 license and is active for all students, professors (including those on contract), technical, administrative and librarian staff.

The terms and conditions for the use of Teams for the purposes of video recording lectures are illustrated in specific instructions published on the University website, being subject to updates.

The University also provides other digital platforms (i.e. Moodle), in order to raise the number of learning tools made available to professors.

Digital material

Digital material relating to video recordings of lectures remains stored in repositories certified by the University.

Video recordings **should be kept** at least for the whole semester or the length of the related course (if annual) or according to university provisions.

If they are specifically prepared **in asynchronous** video-lectures, they can also be used in another academic year, as additional teaching material or part of the teaching program, according to requirements for this type of lecture.

In case of recordings of conventional lectures, they can only be used in the running academic year.

Regulations on privacy and intellectual property relating to recordings of lecture are available as a document on the University website.

Other forms of distance teaching activities

Digital tools that allow remote interaction with students can be effectively used for teaching activities regarding services for students, such as

- office hours;
- supplementary teaching activities to support or reinforce courses;
- explanations relating to learning tests;
- ongoing tutoring and orientation activities.