

ACODE Learning Modalities 2022

An ACODE Whitepaper – September 2022

Dr Ratna Selvaratnam, Edith Cowan University

Background

ACODE invited members to participate in a survey to inform the first of our whitepaper series for 2022. The purpose of this survey is to provide members a snapshot of how the sector is reviewing the modes in which teaching and learning is delivered, if any. For example, [JISC’s future of digital teaching and learning in higher education](#) proposes that higher education learning activities could move towards more online formats, whether synchronous or otherwise. Table 1 include synchronous and asynchronous online formats as part of the future state of many teaching delivery modes.

Table 1 JISC model of future delivery modes

Old versus new teaching and learning formats		
Teaching and learning	Old formats	New formats
Lectures	In person	(Guided) async online
Tutorials	In person	In person / sync online
Office hours	In person	Sync online
Laboratories	In person	In person / async online
Study groups	In person	Async online
Study spaces	In person	In person

The survey was disseminated in May 2022 and hosted on [Qualtrics](#). Due to the design of the survey tool, some respondents were unable to provide feedback as accurately as they would have liked. However, the 20 responses received still hold value in informing our thinking on the changes in delivery mode that have been accelerated due contemporary influences, including the pandemic. De-identified findings are shared in this report. Note that this is not a research project hence no ethics approval has been obtained.

The first question members were asked was whether their institutions are actively reviewing modes of teaching and learning delivery. For example, courses that were once only in person are now offered, or being considered, in hybrid mode. Figure 1 shows 19 respondents, the almost landslide majority, indicated they are reviewing while only one institution was not carrying out a review.

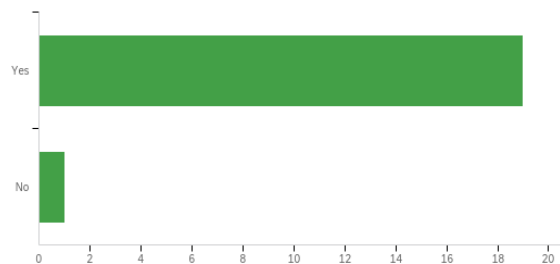


Figure 1 Institutions actively reviewing modes of teaching and learning delivery

Most of the review was happening at the level of the course, as seen in Figure 2, with some review happening at unit or subject level. Qualitative comments show there are more nuanced reviews happening at whole-of-university and even more granularly at teaching activity levels while one respondent indicated the approach was actually ad hoc. One statement is useful to note, hinting towards hybrid delivery modes, which surfaces in further feedback later in the report:

We used a dual delivery model during covid and are trying to avoid the binary approach (online v f2f) and instead promote a range of modes which support flexible and collaborative learning and maximise the positive aspects of f2f

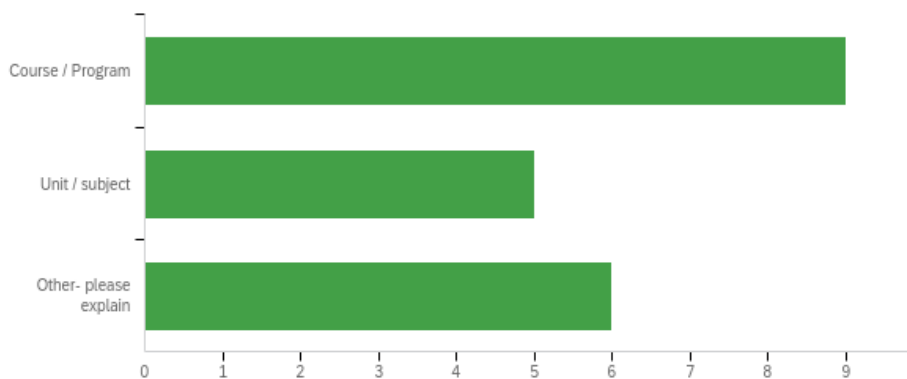


Figure 2 Where delivery modes are being reviewed in an institution

As policy tends to inform commitment to action, members were asked if their institutions were currently reviewing policy or at least planning to do so in the near future. Of the responses received, all but one indicated that they were doing so, see Figure 3.

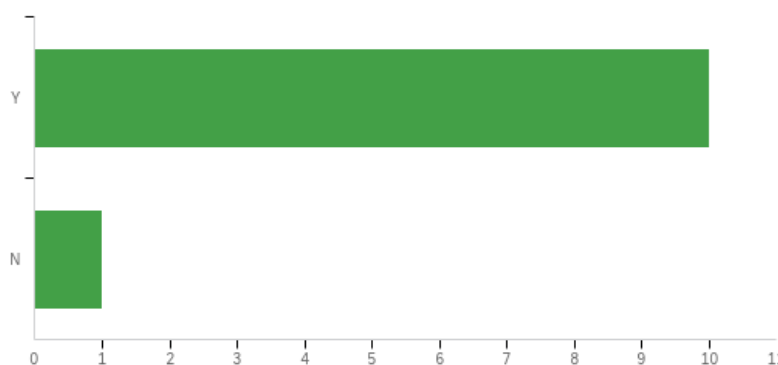


Figure 3 Institutions updating policy on delivery modes

In trying to ascertain the current modes of delivery and the desired future state, the question format and response type proved a challenge for some respondents due to the survey design and access issues. However, the summary below is worth considering as it gives an indication of where some of the thinking around the main modes of delivery is heading. Members were asked what mode their specific current teaching and learning activity delivery modes were and what mode they will be offering in the future. The future options are taken from the JISC summary of in-person, hybrid, digital synchronous and digital asynchronous modes. Table 2 summarises the majority responses of current

and future states. Most activity types seem to be reviewed towards more flexible delivery, with varying levels of hybrid offerings.

Table 2 Activity type- current state and desired future state

Activity type	Current state- majority response	Future state- majority response
Lecture	In-person	Digital asynchronous
Laboratory	In-person	In-person / hybrid
Workshop	In-person	In-person / hybrid / digital synchronous
Seminar	In-person	Digital synchronous
Ensemble	In-person	Hybrid
Studio	In-person	Hybrid
Tutorial	In-person	Hybrid
Practicum	In-person	In-person
Intensives	In-person	Hybrid
Work integrated learning	In-person	In-person

Figure 4 provides more detail by breaking down all the responses for the current activity type against the four modes. Most delivery modes currently are in-person but rapid changes and other factors as seen later in the report, are showing a shift in Figure 5.

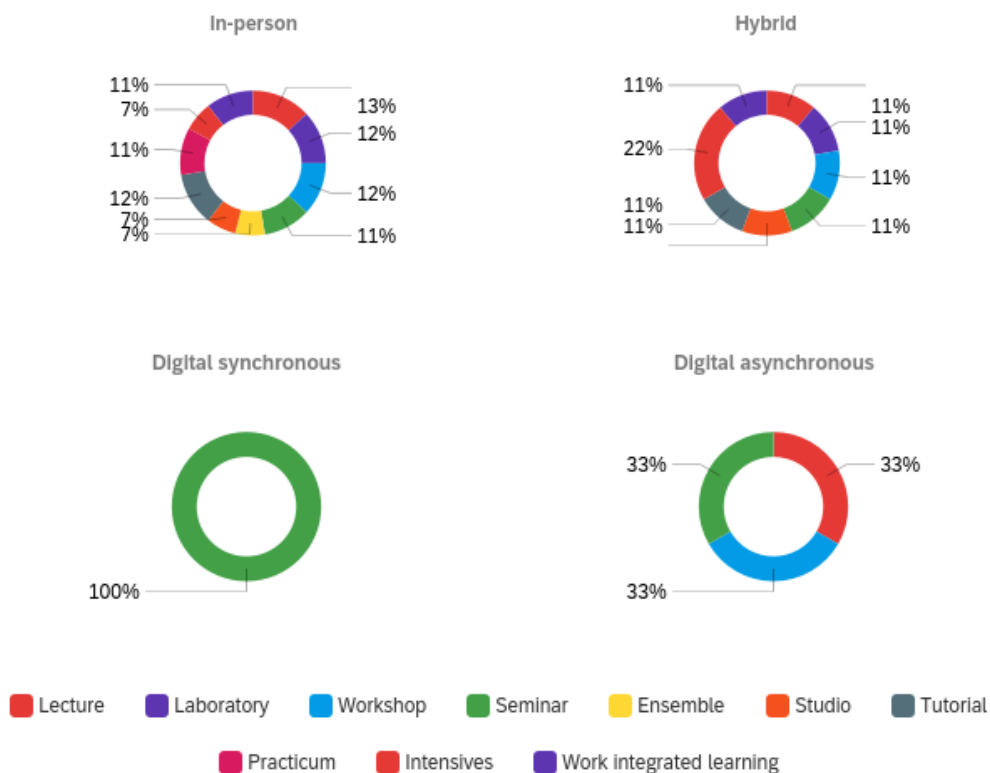


Figure 4 Current or old modes of delivery by activity type

Figure 5 provides more detail by breaking down all the responses for the future activity type against the four modes. Most delivery will be incorporating digital and hybrid modes.

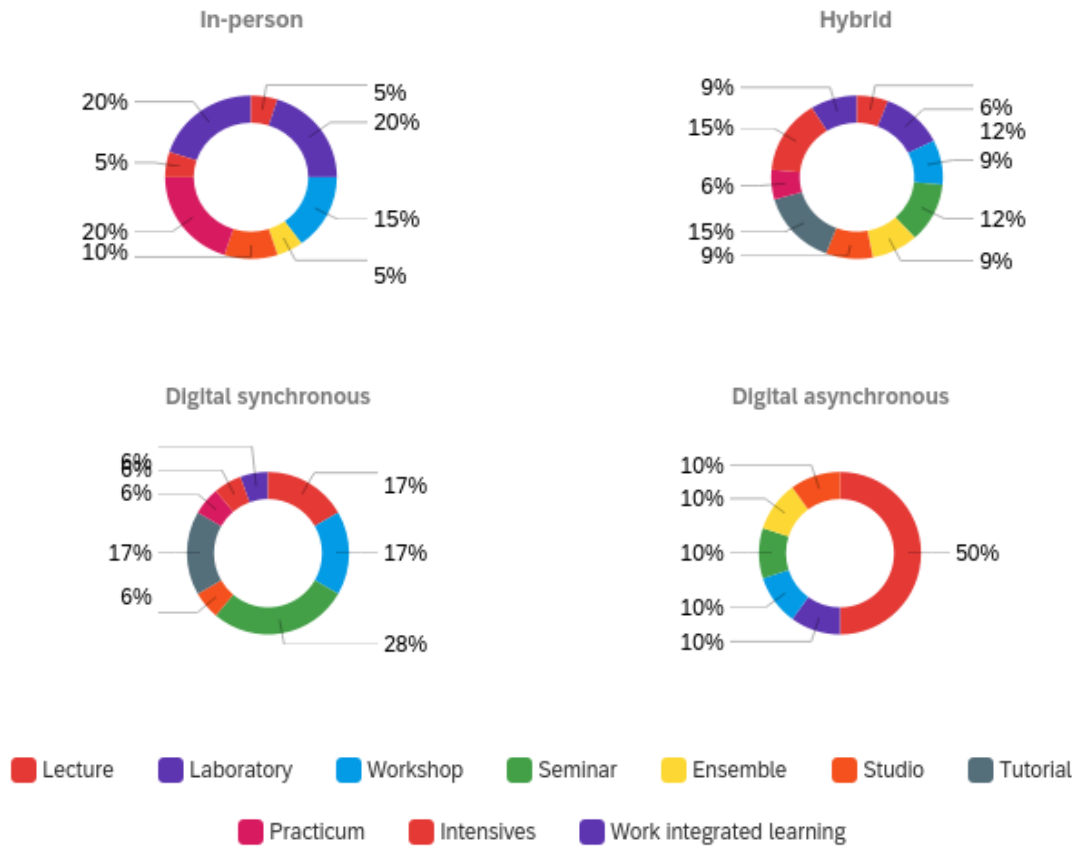


Figure 5 New or future modes of delivery by activity type

Members were asked the reasons for the change in delivery mode. Most indicated the factors in consideration include evolving pedagogies, access and inclusion, student feedback, technology advances and external reasons such as the pandemic. The responses are summarized in Figure 6. Qualitative feedback provided additional insight citing further reasons include demographic of the student cohort, evolving business models and a combination of factors which included industry needs and regulatory standards.

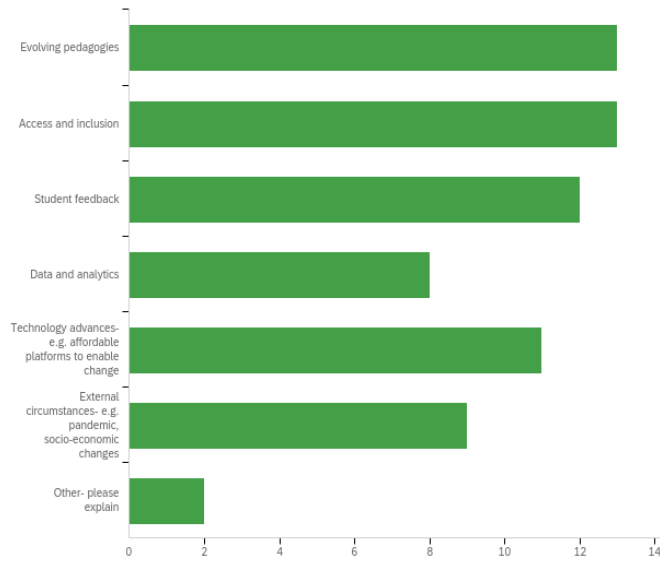


Figure 6 Factors influencing review of delivery modes

Figure 7 shows the changes in institutions’ technology stack to enable the move to new modes of delivery. Most are in the software space citing learning management system enhancements, or complete change, as the main source, together with the associated people capability. Others included consideration of overall operational systems and platforms integrations, use of augmented and virtual reality tools and generally the need for new software. Considerations for hardware include high-end computing capability, more accessible computers, contemporary audio-visual equipment to enable “place-to-place” learning experiences (rather than traditional videoconferencing), increased server space and digital capture tools. Other than hardware and software, respondents also cited other factors that contribute to changing modalities such as new institutional practices and processes, technology enabled culture and support mechanisms, and again, macro institutional mechanisms that teachers and students access.

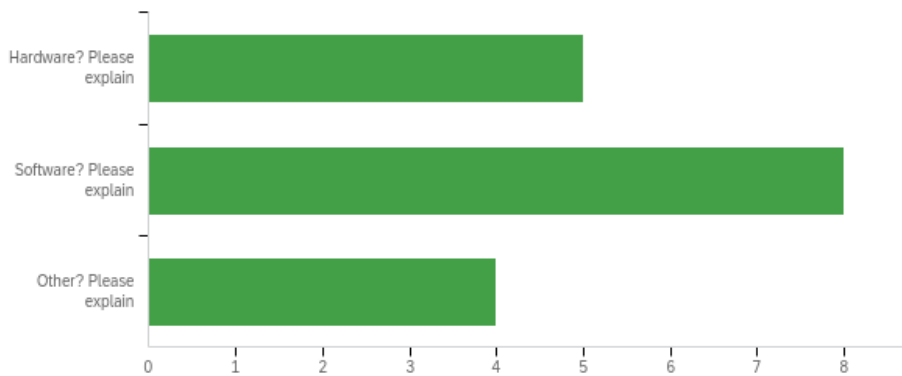


Figure 7 Changes in institutions’ technology stack to enable proposed modes of delivery

Members shared qualitative feedback on whether and how their institutions will be creating new learning experiences that will affect modes of delivery. Key themes that emerged from the responses which will indeed result in change include:

- Creating immersive learning opportunities
- Review of learning activity nomenclature
- Focus on quality assurance and continuous improvement processes
- Creating suitable (physical) learning environments

Members also provided some insightful thoughts on considerations when changing delivery modes, with broad themes including:

- Change needs to be technology-enabled, not technology-driven
- Changes in the operating environment will cause change in business processes, including learning and teaching
- There can be multiple modes of future-state delivery that replace the old, subsuming needs of work-integrated learning providers, multiple campus locations and importantly, student needs
- The term “modes of delivery” itself could be open to reinterpretation in an institution’s review

Conclusion

In conclusion, this report shows there are certainly changes in the mode teaching and learning is now delivered at higher education institutions in Australasia, with significant disruption to in-person delivery. There is an opportunity to continue the conversation on how educational institutions are re-conceptualising these new delivery modes. This can also include what evolving pedagogies look like and impact on diversity, access and inclusion in the student experience. With more robust research in this space, ACODE members can inform their policy and practice that can evolve the sector forward to a contemporary and meaningful student experience by accessing learning in various ways.



The Australasian Council on Open Distance and eLearning.

Please cite: Selvaratnam, R. (2022). ‘ACODE Learning Modalities 2022: An ACODE Whitepaper’. Australasian Council on Open Distance and eLearning (ACODE). Canberra. Australia. (9 September). Available from: <https://www.acode.edu.au/course/view.php?id=5#section-5>

Any queries related to this paper should, in the first instance, be addressed to the ACODE Secretariat at: secretariat@acode.edu.au
