Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

hybot
Go hybrid with chatbots

**hybot**
Enhancing hybrid teaching in higher education through chatbots

# Spanning the online-face-to-face border: Hybrid teaching at University of Applied Sciences Bristol

This work is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License**. You are free to copy, share, adapt, use the material for non-commercial purposes, as long as you meet the following conditions:
Attribution: You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests that Right to Remain endorses you or your use.
NonCommercial: You may not use the material for commercial purposes.

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The creation of this resource has been partially funded by the ERASMUS+ grant program of the European Union under grant no. 2021-1-DE01-KA220-HED-000023203. Neither the European Commission nor the project's national funding agency DAAD are responsible for the content or liable for any losses or damage resulting of the use of this resource.

Staatlich anerkannte, private Fachhochschule des Mittelstands (FHM)
ktu kaunas university of technology 1922
UNIVERSITÉ CÔTE D'AZUR
UNIVERSIDADE AbERTA www.uab.pt
TALLINN UNIVERSITY

## INTRODUCTION

During the pandemic times in 2021, students at University of Applied Sciences Bristol were facing a lot of quite diverse challenges: some students were studying part-time while working full-time in schools. Some of them faced a very demanding work environment, including rapid changes in government guidance and frequent closures. Other students had just arrived in the United Kingdom and faced the challenges of a long isolation period and difficulties making connections with social distancing in place. The hybrid teaching setting helped make a bridge between different needs of students.

## GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE HYBRID TEACHING PRACTICE

- Implementer: School of Education at the University of Applied Science Bristol (Bristol, United Kingdom)
- Study program: Master's Education
- Course: Education policy in a global context
- Lifetime: during 2021.
- Reference: case study of Professor Robin Shields presented during the "Reflections on Hybrid Teaching" workshop at University of Applied Science Bristol (November 2021) https://bilt.online/reflections-on-hybrid-teaching-robin-shields/
- Compiled and structured by Fachhochschule des Mittelstandes

## PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

The hybrid teaching practice was implemented by Robin Shields, a Professor of Education in the School of Education at the University of Applied Science Bristol, under the course "Education Policy in a Global Context", which was part of a full-time Master's program in Education. A total of 100 students aged between 18 to 28 years enrolled in the program. The hybrid teaching unit was structured as a lecture for all program participants as well as a seminar for smaller groups of 20 - 25 students. About 25 of these students attended the course online, however, about five of them were transitioning between online and face-to-face learning. Approximately 15 students took part completely remote as they were located in other countries and different time zones.
Most of the students had already experienced other online lectures and had practiced Zoom or MS Teams videoconferencing. None of students had special needs. The teacher had longer experience with online teaching in terms of didactics and technology. Neither learners nor teachers had specific experience with hybrid teaching before.

## INITIAL SITUATION

Online teaching during the pandemic has presented both, challenges and opportunities, for learning styles and student assessment. To meet these challenges, Bristol Institute for Learning and

Teaching (BILT) at the Bristol University aimed to give guidance and support to the use of technology in teaching as well as to improve the infrastructure.
To support the approaches to digital, blended and hybrid learning, BILT staff was engaged in the following activities:

- Evaluating hybrid teaching approaches and sharing good practice;
- Evaluating digital teaching and learning experiences and sharing good practice;
- Working with BILT associates focused on sharing good practice and developing resources;
- Funding education development projects focused on digital and blended learning;
- Working with BILT Student Fellows to produce further guidance and resources.

Therefore, BILT offers support services for teachers via a Blog and an office for digital education. Teachers are provided with digital learning case studies, advices from academics running hybrid sessions, or guidance pages for digital education known as “Four Quick Wins for Hybrid Teaching”. These “top-tips” are summarized below:

- Start every hybrid session with an activity that gets the online and in-person students interacting;
- Consider how much content is on your presentation (less is more);
- Keep the online and in-person student groups in separate breakout rooms:
- Create regular pauses and ensure that students online are not getting left behind.

### CURRENT REASON

Under pandemic conditions hybrid lectures were held in subjects that covered educational foundations. Since students have returned to the traditional learning settings, hybrid teaching scenarios have continued only as needed.

### BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

Hybrid teaching approach had positive effects on students’ learning experience even after the distant learning period during the pandemic as follows:

- the learning environment was flexibly accessible in terms of time and place;
- students had more mobile flexibility;
- students could attend lectures synchronously and asynchronously;
- students took more responsibility for the success of their learning process;
- students achieved deeper experience in different learning modes (online, hybrid, face-to-face, asynchronously or synchronously);
- face-to-face-teaching became more enriched by digital teaching methods like online collaboration.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Throughout the course, the students should have acquired basic knowledge of definition and concepts of global education, stakeholders (such as educators and policy makers), the motivation

and drivers for global education, competences and methodology for practicing global education. They should also have been enabled to analyse and reflect on concrete current issues on the basis of the theory they have learnt and to develop approaches to solutions.

## HYBRID TEACHING SCENARIO

The course “Education policy in a global context” was held in the form of short one-hour lectures followed by an one-hour seminar for discussion groups. The lectures were attended by every student. The one-hour seminars were divided into four discussion groups with 20 to 25 students in each group who stayed together during the semester. Both formats were offered simultaneously in presence and online. In the perfect world, there should have been one fixed online discussion group and three constant face-to-face discussion groups. Though, as the students switched between online and face-to-face from lesson to lesson, it was not possible to maintain this strict separation of online or face-to-face working groups. Some participants frequently changed locations during their studies, such as from out of town to Bristol or vice versa. In addition, no information was collected about who was online or who participated in person. Finally, it was less work just to offer everything online and in presence mode rather than to sort out online and face-to-face offerings.

All lectures were recorded allowing students for tracking lectures synchronously or asynchronously. The discussions in the seminars were not recorded to maintain confidentiality: if a group discussion would have been opened to the entire group of 100 participants by video recording, this would have affected the commitment in the discussion groups. Students could watch lectures asynchronously, but they were also expected to attend the seminar group synchronously, even if that required them to work outside their time zones.

## HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE USED

Lectures and seminars were transmitted via Zoom webconferencing tool, which was familiar and easy to use by students and teachers. The teacher used his own laptop setting up everything he needed by going to the physical lecture room and plugging his device to the HDI. The setup consisted of two webcams. One of them allowed students see the classroom, and the second camera was used by teacher while speaking. In this way, teacher and students had a sense of the context they were in.
Both, online and on-campus students participated in the lecture or seminar with their own laptops. When doing so, on-campus students could also attend the chat or share something. Teachers and students attended via camera, microphone, audio, chat and screen sharing. All lectures were recorded using the Video Recording Software Replay and provided via a streaming server.

## CONTENT CREATION

Learning materials were produced by the teacher in digital formats and provided to the students via the Microsoft One drive solution. Most of the content, such as presentation charts in PPT or PDF format, exercise tasks and materials for group work, glossary or link lists, has been already used in

previous non-hybrid lectures and was only slightly adapted. There was no support needed for the content production.

### Interaction among participants

During the seminars, word contributions of online participants were acoustically less present so that they were quickly lost. Online participants often did not know whether they were heard or seen. Therefore, the teacher had to structure the course of the seminar well for communication with this group and to moderate it carefully.
Since the seminars' discussion groups usually were composed of five online and around 20 in-person students, no breakout Zoom rooms were used. For group discussions, the classroom audio was simply muted. The online participants could initiate discussions among themselves without disturbing the face-to-face groups. This prevented online students from getting lost or dropping out during transition to an extra breakout room. Also, this helped them experience the lecture as one session without interruptions.
The chat was working as a kind of a backchannel during the whole lecture. Without the chat, the lecture would have been like a pre-recorded lecture. From the teachers perspective, the chat was used to receive and give feedback and to see to which extent the students were engaged with the lecture.
The students used the chat by relating the teacher's comments to their own experiences. For example, they made a joke, pointed out a mistake or told a brief anecdote.
Looking at the recording in Zoom, teacher and students could see the chat transcript. In the last lecture, there were 75 messages posted during an one-hour lecture. The chat was a consistent and support-intensive activity. Therefore, a technical assistant moderated the chat discussion with the students parallel to the lecture.

### Assessment

At the beginning of the course, an informal self-assessment test was offered to help students identify their initial level of skills. These tests were supposed to be carried out outside the lectures. The final assessment consisted of the submission of a written study paper on a lecture topic at the end of the semester.

### Student evaluation

One of the most important evaluation aspects was how the hybrid setting spanned across the online-face-to-face border. At the beginning of the lecture period, there were questions discussed by the whole group. For example, if participants gave feedback in the online group and shared it to the class, they could not be confident that they could hear them or they could see them. Though, the sound worked well, so that there was back and forth communication among online and face-to-face students, as well.
Another interesting advantage of the transition across the border was for students who moved from outside to Bristol over the course of that semester. Some participants lived outside Bristol at the

beginning. One of the students came from Japan. She participated online the first week and then came to the UK. It was nice for the students group to see the same person in real life they have seen online the week before.

### TEACHER EVALUATION

The range of requirements for teaching was very high: teacher had to keep the learning content in mind by thinking of what was coming next. Technology has to be mastered, and teacher had to stay in touch with online and on-campus students and move between them. The teacher pointed out that both was only possible with 80% of the bandwidth.
According to the teacher, it was important to offer every lecture in person, too, so that participants felt always valued even when they participated online. They perceived the event as more "real" and felt more responsible.
Students have matured in their communication skills now. Speaking to a group of students once might never met before around the world was not such an extraordinary situation that would have been two or three years ago.

### QUALITY ASSURANCE

The quality assurance was practiced in the same way as in non-hybrid lectures. In addition, there was institutional support for the evaluation of the hybrid teaching approach and sharing good practice.

### TRANSFERABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The teacher resumed that the students now have deeper experience in transitioning across the online-face-to-face border and know what is possible: learning online, hybrid or face-to-face, asynchronously or synchronously. Although there were still problems in terms of technology, communication and collaboration, for most of them it was a fun learning opportunity.

### TIME COMMITMENT

The course ran over one semester and consisted of ten lectures of 60 minutes each combined with ten seminar sessions of 60 minutes each. The additional time required by the teacher when switching to hybrid lecture was mainly due to technical adjustments (e.g. integrating additional cameras, setting up a technical assistant for the chat, adapting and uploading materials).

### HIGHLIGHTS

Looking back, Robin Shields described some of his experiences during the period of social distance as follows:
"I was aware that students are facing a lot of challenges this year, so I tried to remind students to be kind to themselves frequently. These challenges were quite diverse: some students are studying

part-time while working full-time in schools. They faced a very demanding work environment, including rapid changes in government guidance and frequent closures. Other students had just arrived in the UK and faced the challenges of a long isolation period and difficulties making connections with social distancing in place. Most of my teaching was online this year, but when guidelines allowed, I held small (6 person) meetings in Berkeley Square, so that students would have some in-person contact. I also tried to remind students of the progress they were making. I used interactive slide software (https://2sli.de) that I developed myself a few years ago. It is a good way to spur participation in seminar discussions and helps to break the ice for discussion in breakout rooms. I was happy with how it works in an online context, although I'd like to find time to update the software".

## Further References

- Interview with Professor Robin Shields: https://bilt.online/an-interview-with-robin-shields/
- Four Quick Wins for Hybrid Teaching: https://bilt.online/four-quick-wins-for-hybrid-teaching/