

WHAT IS ONLINE LEARNING?

The focus of this report is online education. To maintain consistency with previous work, we have applied the same definitions used in our four prior annual reports. These definitions were presented to the respondents at the beginning of the survey, and then repeated in the body of individual questions where appropriate.

Online courses, the primary focus of this report, are those in which at least 80 percent of the course content is delivered online. Face-to-face instruction includes those courses in which zero to 29 percent of the content is delivered online; this category includes both traditional and Web facilitated courses. The remaining alternative, blended (sometimes called hybrid) instruction is defined as having between 30 percent and 80 percent of the course content delivered online. While the survey asked respondents for information on all types of courses, the current report is devoted to online learning only.

While there is a great deal of diversity among course delivery methods used by individual instructors, the following is presented to illustrate the prototypical course classifications used in this study.

Proportion of Content Delivered Online	Type of Course	Typical Description
0%	Traditional	Course with no online technology used — content is delivered in writing or orally.
1 to 29%	Web Facilitated	Course that uses web-based technology to facilitate what is essentially a face-to-face course. Uses a course management system (CMS) or web pages to post the syllabus and assignments, for example.
30 to 79%	Blended/Hybrid	Course that blends online and face-to-face delivery. Substantial proportion of the content is delivered online, typically uses online discussions, and typically has some face-to-face meetings.
80+%	Online	A course where most or all of the content is delivered online. Typically have no face-to-face meetings.

Schools may offer online learning in a variety of ways. The survey asked respondents to characterize their face-to-face, blended, and online learning by the level of the course (undergraduate, graduate, non-credit, etc.). Likewise, respondents were asked to characterize their face-to-face, blended, and online program offerings.