

Blog – October 2021

## Return to campus – a blended experience

We are almost halfway through the first semester of the new academic year. I had a chance to go onto campus a few weeks ago and I must say, it was rather exciting. To walk through those familiar hallways, peek into the lecture halls, see the newly opened seating areas and then come across a wall planner which was last used in March 2020! It was like being in an enchanted tale where the whole palace was frozen in time, only to be woken up through the breaking of a spell. Whilst it did feel like the hustle and bustle of campus was there, it was visibly less crowded. The main reason being that a lot of the courses are being offered as either remote or blended. By blended, I mean a course that has an element of in-person (e.g., a tutorial) with an online component such as a lecture. Personally, all my lectures are currently remote, and I do feel more organized and confident than last year - mainly because my classes are smaller in size, enabling a sense of engagement with the professor and fellow students. I also feel that my professors have been more innovative with the delivery of these remote classes, utilising a variety of zoom features to make each session more interactive. But I did wonder how those doing blended courses feel about the in-person element balanced with online.

So how are your courses going so far? Whether you are online or partly on campus, the consensus, when I speak to people, is that everyone has different levels of needs, comfort and sometimes they shift as you adapt to new ways of learning. I did a quick anonymous poll\* amongst the mature student group who are currently taking blended learning courses. Firstly, I asked ***What is the most important thing for you in being able to do blended learning?*** A few respondents stated that they felt good about being able to record the lecture as well as feeling safe at home due to health reasons. The rest appreciated the in-person component the most, for example sharing ideas in tutorials.

*\*Due to a small number of responses, results should be interpreted as anecdotal*

I then asked ***What do you think would make your experience better?*** A variety of responses were given including being able to do all in-person attendance, the ability to have more study spaces and an option for more classes to be available online using Hyflex technology\*\*. One respondent really appreciated the availability of the online component and hoped the professors are given more guidance to utilise all features of Zoom to their advantage.

Lastly, I asked ***Do you have a tip you can share with your fellow students that is helping you stay organized and motivated whilst doing blended learning?*** Top tips were: use a quiet study area - Scott Library quiet study spaces were highly recommended; booking these study spaces 7 days in advance to ensure you have the time you need; and, break up your study sessions with alarms/ timers to be able to switch between subjects as this can improve course material retention.

A student who is fully remote and is currently registered with SAS (Student Accessibility Services) added that being online has been more beneficial because there are fewer distractions and noises than in the classroom. This has made it easier to organise the workload and focus on the material without being overwhelmed. But they are looking forward to taking small steps back and enjoying the facilities of the campus more in the future.

So, really it has been a mixed bag of experiences and attitudes which highly depend on your personal study style and circumstances. There are many resources on offer to help you get the most out of your study experience. [Learning Skills Services](#) offer workshops and tips to help you study and manage your time more effectively, [Student Counselling, Health & Well-Being](#) offers wellbeing workshops and counselling services. [ACMAPS](#) offers regular Café Hours as well as many other workshops such as Student-Parents Get Togethers and the [Student Peer Mentor program](#). Follow the [YU Better Together](#) site for up-to-date information on study spaces and visiting the Campus safely.

\*\*A Hyflex classroom is equipped with technology that enables remote students to seamlessly participate in a course that is delivered on campus. The technology installed in the classrooms ensures the two-way engagement of all participants. This is currently only trialled by a small number of programs/faculties.

[acmaps@yorku.ca](mailto:acmaps@yorku.ca)  
<https://acmaps.info.yorku.ca/events/>  
Tel: 416-736-5770  
Twitter: @yorkacmaps  
Facebook: @YorkACMAPS  
Instagram: @acmapsyorku

**Sabina Goranova,**  
Mature Student, 4th year BA (Hons)  
Communication and Media Studies