

Online Education Planning:

Digital Learning Opportunities

2018-2023

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The Online Education Planning process supports the work of the [Digital Planning Project Group,](https://www.queensu.ca/strategicplanning/digital) led by Martha Whitehead, Vice-Provost (Digital Planning) and University Librarian, and Jennifer Doyle, Chief Information Officer and Associate Vice-Principal IT Services, which has been tasked with developing a framework to support the university’s core mission of teaching, research and knowledge sharing through a digital lens. Online Education Planning is a subset of Digital Planning, and the processes have informed each other. The principles of Digital Planning apply equally to Online Education (see Appendix).

The report articulates the strengths, opportunities and challenges for online learning, and makes recommendations to address gaps and to inform and guide future growth. The working group recognizes that some of the recommendations may be implemented quickly while others will take longer to complete. The plan has been given an end date of 2023 with the view that online learning is a rapidly-changing landscape and that in five years’ time it will be necessary to take stock of our progress and refresh our goals.

### The Challenges and Opportunities of Growing Online Education

The higher education landscape has been changing rapidly in recent years. Advances in educational technologies have led to a rise in digital learning environments for both on-campus and distance learning, as well as the introduction of adaptive learning software and calls for open educational resources. Student demographics have been shifting to include a larger proportion of adult and professional learners who wish to upgrade their skill sets to remain competitive in the labour market. Students and parents are more concerned than ever about the value-added of a university degree, asking for skills-based curricula, experiential learning opportunities and structured career support. Institutions are becoming more local and more global, including purposeful integrations with regional economic development and also greater internationalization, including student mobility, international research collaborations, and increased competition for global talent.

In the Ontario context, there have been dramatic changes in the enrolment landscape with the advent of the corridor funding model, which limits universities’ capacity to grow enrolments in the traditional domestic and for-credit models. As a result, non-credit programs are likely to increase substantially in the future. Because the market for these kinds of programs is adult and professional learners, it is anticipated that much of this growth will be in online formats. In order to support the development of non-credit programs for non-traditional markets, now is the time to develop appropriate infrastructure, processes and policies.

Many of the above-mentioned changes have been important drivers for increased online learning at Queen’s and more broadly across the sector. Time-pressed non-traditional students need flexible programs to allow them to continue their studies while meeting their work and

family responsibilities, often at a distance. On-campus students want to take some of their courses online in order to manage busy schedules, including athletics, co-curricular activities and part-time work. Students completing an internship, practicum or study-abroad experience may wish to continue their studies at a distance. Enrolment constraints among professional programs, e.g. Medicine, Nursing and Education, have led faculties to create new programs, mostly in online formats. The corridor funding model is likely to drive further increases in online learning, specifically for non-credit courses and programs. Finally, while Queen’s has yet to explore international markets more fully for online learning, this represents an area of significant opportunity.

In addition to these drivers, growth in fully online courses and programs was also fueled by Queen’s success in provincial competitions for course and program-development funds. The more than $5M in new one-time money received by the university between 2014 and 2017 allowed faculties to develop many new online courses and programs and to build infrastructure to support their development and delivery.[1](#_bookmark0) A great deal of effort and energy went into developing winning proposals and there is much to celebrate in the achievement of faculties and schools. Queen’s was the most successful institution in the competitions, receiving the largest portion of funding from eCampus Ontario (formerly the Ontario Online Initiative), and some of this success can be attributed to the evidence-based approach to instructional design highlighted in the submissions and the efforts to ground pedagogical approaches, learning design and assessment in the literature on cognitive science.

The large influx of external funding fueled significant growth in online enrolments. In 2017-18, Queen’s had 25,739 online course registrations (22,296 undergraduate; 3,443 graduate), up from 21,797 in 2016-17, a 15% increase. The increase from 2015-16 to 2016-17 was even greater at 20%. The proportion of distance registrations in online courses has more than doubled from 2013 to 2017, increasing from 8% to 17.5%. Finally, Queen’s has grown its spring/summer enrolments significantly by offering online options to students, and the percentage of spring/summer enrolments within online courses has also increased from 31% to 44% since 2013. As a proportion of total course registrations, registrations in fully online courses now make up approximately 10% of total enrolment (see Appendix for details).

In the last five years, the number of online programs has also seen rapid growth.[2](#_bookmark1) The majority of new programs developed in the last three academic cycles, 2015-16 to 2017-18, have been online or mostly online with intensive on-campus modules. As of fall 2018, Queen’s offers a total of 30 fully online programs, for example bachelor degrees in Health Sciences, Psychology and History, undergraduate certificates in Law, Global Development Studies and Employment Relations, and graduate and professional degrees, such as the Master of Health Care Quality, the Professional Master of Education and the Executive Master of Business Administration.

1 Over a 4-year period, [Queen’s was awarded just over $5M to develop new online courses and programs](https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/taking-closer-look-online-learning-queen-s) first from the Ontario Online Institute and then [eCampus Ontario,](https://www.ecampusontario.ca/) and this funding enabled rapid growth to meet a growing student demand.

2 Some online programs, in particular graduate and professional ones, have short intensive residential components. Please see Appendix for a complete list of online programs.

Even traditionally face to face fields like Engineering have seen growth in online learning, such as the Bachelor of Technology in Mining Engineering. Queen’s also has a growing number of non-credit courses and programs. The Faculty of Education has been a leader in non-credit education with total course registrations through Continuing Teaching Education (which includes courses in a variety of disciplines) approaching 10,000 annually.

The rapid and significant expansion in online courses and programs at Queen’s has led to the need to develop infrastructure, services, processes and policies to support distance and online education. These supports for online learning have at times struggled to keep pace with the growth in academic programming. Without a clear institutional plan, there have been many questions about where online learning fits within Queen’s strategic priorities and who should be responsible for leading change. In light of the expansion online education and the need for comprehensive planning, the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) struck a working group to make recommendations to ensure the continued success of online learning at Queen’s and to allow the university to fully realize the significant opportunities that distance and online education offers for the future of the institution.

### Consultations: what we heard

The Working Group held several consultation sessions to hear the views of students, staff and faculty from across the university about online education at Queen’s.[3](#_bookmark2) The objective of the consultations was to take stock of where we are as an institution, test assumptions, acknowledge barriers and challenges to Queen’s current state of online education, and to explore opportunities to expand and enhance online education for the future.

#### Sessions conducted May 16-May 30 inclusive

* Steering Committee (piloting questions and approach)
* Five regular sessions on-campus (over three weeks)
* One meeting via Zoom with distance learning students
* 66 participants in total: 12 faculty, 35 staff, 19 students
* Participation from all faculties, schools and relevant central units

#### Strengths and assets

* A strong Queen’s brand, locally and nationally, that extends to online education; the brand can be leveraged to market online offerings and attract talented students.
* Rapid growth in online courses and programs, supported by Queen’s success in the Ontario Online Initiative and [eCampus Ontario](https://www.ecampusontario.ca/) competitions for course and program- development funds.
* Highly qualified faculty with disciplinary expertise and growing knowledge of online pedagogies and strategies to promote student engagement.
* Teaching and learning professionals with a wide-range of skill sets and knowledge in the areas of instructional design, accessibility and diversity in online environments, interactive multimedia learning objects and web design, and educational technologies.
* Queen’s decentralized model with faculty-based online development units that have enabled quick decision-making and alignment with local academic priorities.

#### Weaknesses and gaps

* Queen’s has not had an overarching plan to guide growth and expansion in online education, and where the decentralized model has allowed faculties to be nimble, it has led to some inconsistencies in student experience, resulted in duplication and inefficiencies, and has left central services working hard to catch up. There has been confusion around which services should be offered centrally and which by the faculty. A strong governance model will be required to meet the needs of online learning.
* There was also some uncertainty about whether Queen’s is already well known for high- quality online education, with varying views on our reputation, locally, nationally, internationally, among students or peer institutions. There are varying degrees of knowledge about Queen’s online education. There has not been a strong central web

3 The consultation process was supported by Kathryn Wood of [Pivotal Momentum Inc.](https://www.pivotalmomentum.com/)

presence for online learning and marketing has largely been managed within departments and faculties.

* There are lingering perceptions that online courses as less rigorous, more open to breaches of academic integrity, or lacking in student engagement. There are also concerns about access to experiential learning, co-curricular opportunities and the sense of community that is such an important part of the Queen’s brand.
* Quality in online learning has been largely defined in terms of instructional design, course delivery and pedagogical approaches. Quality needs to encompass the entirety of the student learning experience, such as offering services to students outside of normal hours of operation and in web formats, including student advising, IT support, library services, the writing centre, health and wellness services, career services, etc.
* Infrastructure, processes and procedures need to be developed to serve the specific and growing needs of off-campus demographics, including marketing and recruitment, specific resources to support online admissions, and increased digital infrastructure.
* There is some uncertainty regarding faculty willingness to teach online, with about a third agreeing, a third disagreeing and a third uncertain on this point. This same level of hesitation is found in the question of whether those who can teach in a classroom can teach online. Professional development and training for faculty would help to increase confidence in teaching online.

#### Opportunities

* There was a strong consensus on the view that online education represents a significant opportunity for Queen’s (96%), that online courses can enhance an on-campus degree (89%), and that different types of online students have different needs, whether on or off campus (92%). This confirms the need to plan appropriately to enhance quality and ensure growth is sustainable and operationally feasible.
* Respondents felt that online learning has strong potential to contribute to [Queen’s Comprehensive International Plan](https://www.queensu.ca/strategicplanning/international) and that online formats can help the university to reach beyond current markets. More work will need to be done to identify potential new markets, build custom credentials, and recruit quality students.
* Increased access for non-traditional learners was cited as a major benefit of online education at Queen’s. Among these groups are working adults who are pursuing higher education for the first time or coming back to finish a degree, those who live in rural and remote areas, lower socio-economic demographics who cannot afford to live on campus, or people with disabilities for whom learning from home reduces barriers. It will be important to develop robust learning supports to ensure the success of students from non-traditional demographics. Another significant demographic are professionals who want to upgrade their education with a graduate or professional credential but who need flexibility to fit this into their work and family life.
* Online education is part of a larger shift to the digital age, something that will become just another option and will be normalized within our core operations. For example, emerging innovations in augmented reality and virtual reality offer significant opportunities for the future of both online and in-person learning.

### Recommendations

The Online Education Planning Report is aligned with the [Queen’s University Strategic](https://www.queensu.ca/strategicplanning/framework) [Framework](https://www.queensu.ca/strategicplanning/framework), and the recommendations support the four pillars in a variety of ways. Online education supports the *Student Learning Experience* pillar by providing high-quality learning opportunities in formats to meet the needs of current learners enhanced by the purposeful use of educational technologies. The growth in online programs and courses has supported *Financial Sustainability* by attracting net new students in distance categories, and growth in non-credit online offerings will continue to support this goal. While Queen’s has not fully leveraged growth in global markets to meet the university’s aspirations for *Internationalization*, this report recommends exploring new markets and tailoring programs to meet the needs of specific international demographics. Online education supports *Research Prominence* because programs and courses are informed by the world-class research undertaken by Queen’s faculty, and online learning is an opportunity to expand the dissemination of Queen’s research.

Furthermore, some online programs offer opportunities for research about teaching and learning online, such as the [1 Million Teachers Project](https://www.queensu.ca/alumni/queens-faculty-of-education-signs-an-agreement-with-1-million-teachers) in the Faculty of Education. Overall, online education is an important tactic to support the goals of the Queen’s Strategic Framework.

#### Affirm online education as an important means of achieving Queen’s core mission

* + **Continue to expand online education as part of an exceptional student learning experience**, as adult and professional learners become a greater proportion of the student body and the demand for more flexible delivery options grows.
  + **Position online education as an important part of growing Queen’s international prominence for a global future**; developing new markets will require new modes of delivery, including distance, online and blended.

#### Develop governance and policy frameworks to guide the growth of online learning

* + **Develop a strong governance model for Queen’s Online**, in conjunction with Queen’s Digital Planning Project Group and guided by the [Queen’s Digital Strategy Guiding Principles](https://www.queensu.ca/strategicplanning/digital), including assigning roles and responsibilities for various units on campus and striking a steering committee to oversee the implementation of the report.
  + **Adapt institutional policies and procedures to address online learning**, for example, academic policies, accommodations policies, academic integrity, student awards and bursaries, and student assessment of teaching (USAT).
  + **Determine which infrastructure and services should be offered centrally and which should be faculty based**; consideration should be given to consistency of student experience, efficiency, cost, and existing structures and investments in online learning.
  + **Consider creating a senior leadership role for Queen’s Online** to oversee the coordination of services and the development or revision of policies and procedures.
  + **Develop an institutional data collection strategy**, working with Office of Institutional Research and Planning, Office of the University Registrar, faculties and schools to collect and collate consistent data in usable formats, e.g. enrolment data by course and by program, breakdowns of on-campus and distance students, domestic and international, for credit and non-credit, and new programs developed.

#### Develop a strong brand and marketing strategy for Queen’s Online

* + **Enhance the brand for Queen’s Online**, including a robust central web presence with comprehensive information for prospective and current students and clear admissions pathways.
  + **Create a coordinated marketing strategy for Queen’s Online**, taking into consideration faculty-specific programing and university-wide messaging, with strong visual identity across all online platforms and materials. It will be important to understand why students are choosing online courses, e.g. to continue at a distance in the spring/summer, to spread course load, for scheduling flexibility.

#### Enhance the quality of the student learning experience for online education

* + **Define and promote quality for Queen’s online**, including university-wide quality standards and a system for monitoring quality according to the guidelines of [Quality Matters](https://www.qualitymatters.org/) or other internationally recognized quality frameworks.
  + **Ensure that distance students have access to services extended beyond regular hours**, such as advising, library services, student success, IT Services, career services, and health and wellness services.
  + **Develop mechanisms to build a sense of community and belonging for distance students**, such as orientation, extracurricular and experiential learning opportunities, student government, convocation, and alumni relations.
  + **Reduce barriers for students wishing to take courses in multiple faculties and schools** to encourage interdisciplinary learning opportunities for students and to enable students to explore options for credentials.
  + **Promote consistency of student experience across faculties and schools** by aligning policies and procedures, adhering to visual identity guidelines and working toward a common look and feel for learning management systems and resources.

#### Enhance supports and engagement for faculty and staff working in online education

* + **Increase support, training and professional development for faculty teaching online**; instructors are more likely to teach online if they have timely, efficient and robust training and support to adapt their pedagogical approach to online environments.
  + **Increase the proportion of regular faculty (FTEs) teaching online**; explore opportunities to integrate online teaching into regular faculty workload assignments.
  + **Increase cross-faculty collaborations and professional learning exchanges** for online learning professionals to enhance the skills and abilities of teaching and learning professionals, recognize talent, and develop a culture of ongoing professional learning.

#### Develop appropriate infrastructure to support online education

* + **Ensure educational technology infrastructure is robust and up-to-date**, including learning management systems and any additional educational software required to deliver quality learning experiences for students, such as remote-proctored exam software.
  + **Develop mechanisms to support non-credit education**, including enhancing student information systems to support enrolment and tracking, non-credit transcripts and policies and processes foster the growth of non-credit courses and programs.
  + **Enhance admissions processes to meet the needs of distance and online students**, including a one-stop-shop approach to admissions for student enrolling in the interest category and letter of permission students, timely responses and processes for applicants to all online credentials. Admissions processes should be centrally administered and appropriately resourced to ensure consistency and efficiency.

#### Support accessibility and diversity for online education

* + **Promote accessibility for online courses and programs**, including adherence to [AODA](https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws) and [Universal Design for Learning](http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/whatisudl), ensuring that accommodations policies are adapted for distance students and appropriate services and supports for students with disabilities.
  + **Promote equity of access** to ensure that programs are available to diverse demographics, including the development of pathways opportunities and appropriate bridging, transition and support programs and resources.
  + **Embed diversity and inclusion into online education**, including diversifying the curriculum to integrate marginalized knowledge and Indigenous knowledge into new and existing courses and programs, and ensuring that pathways and Indigenous Admissions Policies are appropriate for online and distance students.
  + **Support the development of open educational resources and open textbooks** to reduce costs incurred to students and to promote locally-developed materials.

#### Leverage online education to increase internationalization

* + **Align growth in online education with the Queen’s Comprehensive International Plan**, including an emphasis on target markets and consideration of current metrics.
  + **Explore new international markets** and consider adapting existing courses and programs, credit and non-credit, to suit the needs of specific demographics.
  + **Investigate tuition differential for distance programs in international markets**, recognizing that the fees for international students enrolled in on-campus programs may not be competitive with regard to a fully online credential.

#### Develop an implementation plan

* + **Establish a working group to** with appropriate representation from faculties, schools and relevant service units.
  + **Develop a plan with a timeline for implementation**, prioritizing recommendations to maximize benefit for students with short and long-term goals.
  + **Identify human and financial resources** and develop an in-year and multi-year budget with allocations to appropriate units.
  + **Monitor progress on the recommendations** with regular reports to the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) and other relevant bodies.

### Appendices

Online Education Planning Working Group Members

Jill Atkinson, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), Faculty of Arts and Science Leslie Flynn, Vice-Dean Education, Faculty of Health Sciences

Michael Fraser, Vice-Principal (University Relations) Rebecca Luce-Kapler, Dean, Faculty of Education

Stuart Pinchin, Executive Director, Admissions and Recruitment Jill Scott (Chair), Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning)

Ann Tierney, Vice-Provost and Dean, Division of Student Affairs

Martha Whitehead, Vice-Provost (Digital Planning) and University Librarian

### Terms of Reference

* To articulate the role of online education for the future of Queen’s as part of the graduate and undergraduate student learning experience, including domestic and international students, and for-credit and not-for-credit programs.
* To develop principles for engagement and growth in consideration of Queen’s current and future enrollment management and other regulatory or operational constraints.
* To develop principles for program development and delivery, and admissions and recruitment in consideration of the quality of a Queen’s education, guided by the Online Learning Consortium’s [Quality Scorecard for the Administration of Online Programs](https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/consult/olc-quality-scorecard-administration-online-programs/).
* To determine what services and infrastructure are required to support the growth of online programs, including but not limited to student evaluations, IT infrastructure and support, library services, exams, student services (student success, career services, counselling), admissions and convocation, and which of these services should be provided at the faculty level and which by the university.
* To ensure student fees accurately reflect the services available to online students.
* To ensure that data regarding online learning at Queen’s is accurate, up-to-date, and available in a central location.
* To ensure brand consistency in marketing materials; to consider efficiencies in marketing online programs; to consider which aspects of marketing are program and faculty-specific and which ones are institutional (e.g., for international markets); to ensure there is a central web presence for all online courses and programs that is accessible, user-friendly, and up-to-date; and to identify potential target markets for online degree and certificate programs.
* To ensure that equity, diversity and inclusion, including identities and perspectives of Indigenous and racialized students, staff and faculty, are embedded in all aspects of online education at Queen’s.

### Online Education: National and International Growth

The field of online education has been changing rapidly in recent years. Advances in educational technologies and digital infrastructure have made it possible to deliver high quality online courses and programs to students, both on campus and at a distance. A 2016 study by the [Online Learning Consortium](https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/) concludes that there has been a 263% increase in enrolments in online courses and programs at postsecondary institutions in the United States over a 12-year period.

A 2017 comprehensive US study, the [Changing Landscape of Online Education](https://www.qualitymatters.org/sites/default/files/research-docs-pdfs/CHLOE-First-Survey-Report.pdf) (CHLOE2), shows that distance students make up 13% of undergraduates and 28% of graduate students, that 18% of on-campus undergraduates are taking at least one online course, and that 30% of all student types are taking at least one online course. This aligns with a 2018 eCampus Ontario study, which found that 17% of students in Canada take at least one online course. In all, 97% of US institutions with more than 5,000 students are offering online courses, whereas 83% of Canadian postsecondary institutions offer online courses for credit (eCampus 2018). While 77% of US academic leaders see online learning as crucial to their long-term strategy, 85% of faculty say they have little experience with digital learning and that they would benefit from professional development in online pedagogical approaches and instructional methodologies. In Canada, 68% of institutions believe that online learning is extremely or very important to the institution’s strategic direction (eCampus 2018).

The 2017 national study of online learning in Canada, [Tracking Distance and Online Education at](https://onlinelearningsurveycanada.ca/publications/) [Canadian Universities and Colleges](https://onlinelearningsurveycanada.ca/publications/) (TDE), shows that online enrolments have increased by 10-15% per year over the last five years, that approximately 16% of all enrolments at Canadian universities are now in online courses, and that 98% of universities with more than 10,000 students offer some form of online learning. There were more than 1.5 million online course registrations in 2016-2017. The study further concludes that 87% of institutions see online learning as somewhat or very important for their future. The 2018 study found that 74% of Canadian Institutions anticipate increase in next year’s online course registration.

### Perceptions

Students’ and employers’ confidence in the quality of the learning and the reputation of credentials has increased. Students have been voting with their feet – and their fingers – and registering for courses and programs in ever-increasing numbers. A [recent study by eCampus](https://www.ecampusontario.ca/corporate-documents/) [Ontario](https://www.ecampusontario.ca/corporate-documents/) found that graduate students have the greatest familiarity with online learning and are most likely to recommend online programs (p.6).

Growth in online learning in the US throughout the early 2000’s was dominated by private for- profit institutions. With the advent of [Massive Open Online Courses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massive_open_online_course) or MOOCs in 2012, which raised the profile of online learning and brought star professors and award-winning researchers to the online world, highly ranked research universities started offering online courses and programs. There has been a sharp decline in enrolments at private for-profit institutions since 2015 and a similarly large increase in enrolments at public institutions (CHLOE2), a sign that online education has now become a trusted modality for comprehensive and research-intensive institutions.

Growth in open resources has followed the rise of online education. There has been wider adoption of open textbooks, with 53% of Canadian institutions using some form of open text books (eCampus 2018). In Canada, 54% of institutions are in the early stages of training in open educational practices (OEPs) and open educational resources (OERs), and 58% offer training or professional development communities for faculty and staff on OERs.

There has been much debate about the quality of online courses, with some critics suggesting that institutions simply videotape lectures and put materials online and that the main rationale for expanding online learning is to reduce costs. However, the 2017 Canadian study found that only 21% of respondents felt that offering courses in online formats was a means to manage financial sustainability. By and large universities are very concerned about their reputation and want to ensure that the quality of the student learning experience is high across modalities. According to a 2018 eCampus Ontario study, 78% of survey respondents believe that online education is equal to face-to-face education, and 10% believe that online is superior. The 2017 eCampus Ontario study indicates that there is still more work to do in educating the public on the high levels of engagement and interaction present in online learning and in communicating the increased trust that employers have in online credentials (p.27).

In the US, the main drivers for the expansion of online education are increased enrolments, expanding access, graduation rates, program choice, revenue generation, quality enhancement and improving the student learning experience (CHLOE2, p.22). In Canada, the drivers are increased access, increased enrolments, innovative teaching, reduction in space needs, student skill development, and cost-effectiveness ([Tracking Distance Education](https://onlinelearningsurveycanada.ca/publications/) p. 33). Increased access is the top-rated reason for growing online learning in Canada, with 99% of respondents naming this benefit, whereas only 22% of US respondents cite cost-effectiveness as a good reason to expand online offerings.

While only 31% of institutions in the US require the use of instructional designers (CHLOE2, p. 5), a high proportion of courses at Queen’s have been developed with a team that includes an academic lead or faculty expert, instructional designers, multimedia specialists and a variety of other teaching and learning professionals with advanced skillsets. While excellent models for course design and delivery are already in place, the field of online learning is still in rapid development and best practices are still emerging. Organizations such as [Contact North,](https://contactnorth.ca/home) [eCampus Ontario](https://www.ecampusontario.ca/) and [Quality Matters](https://www.google.com/search?q=quality%2Bmatters&amp;ie=utf-8&amp;oe=utf-8&amp;client=firefox-b-ab) are providing much-needed leadership and funding research to enhance the field.

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### Data: working from evidence

The Working Group felt strongly that this plan be grounded in data on online learning, institutional, national or international. But getting good data is not easy. There are considerable similarities between Canada and the US but according to a 2017 Canadian report, [*Tracking*](https://onlinelearningsurveycanada.ca/)[*Online and Distance Education in Canadian University and Colleges*](https://onlinelearningsurveycanada.ca/), both “lack universally agreed definitions and both have challenges with collecting reliable and comparable data” (p.44). According to the 2018 report by eCampus Ontario, only 65% of Canadian institutions share similar definitions of online learning. The US Department of Education began collecting data in the 1990’s and after a lapse of national tracking, in 2003 the Alfred B. Sloan Foundation started supporting institutional surveys.

Since 2016, Digital Learning Compass, a partnership of organizations, has published annual reports. While this report cites data from several comprehensive reports, there is still more work to be done in terms of collecting common data points, consistency of reporting, and the ways in which data is analysed. OIRP and OUR have identified some areas for improvement in tracking Queen’s data on online learning, and one of the aims of this report is to ensure that schools, faculties and shared services work together to develop a data collection strategy that provides consistent data in usable formats.

### Terminology: creating a common language

Developing a common terminology in emerging and rapidly changing fields is a challenge, and this applies to online education. As distance education was gradually moved to electronic formats, the term online education came into use, though there is often confusion because not all online learning happens at a distance and some distance students are not learning exclusively online but learning via synchronous videoconferencing technologies.

By its own admission, the Canadian survey [*Tracking Online and Distance Education in Canadian*](https://onlinelearningsurveycanada.ca/)[*University and Colleges*](https://onlinelearningsurveycanada.ca/) suffered from differences among definitions for “distance education” among provinces and institutions. The US Department of Education’s definition of distance education is: “A course in which the instructional content is delivered exclusively via distance education. Requirements for coming to campus for orientation, testing, or academic support services do not exclude a course from being classified as distance education” (CHLOE2).

Further confusing matters, terms like blended and hybrid point to a mixture of modalities, both in-person and online learning. Only 59% of Canadian institutions share similar definitions of blended or hybrid learning. At Queen’s, blended learning has a specific meaning, and the Faculty of Arts and Science defines [blended learning](https://www.queensu.ca/artsci/staff-and-faculty/initiatives/blended-learning) according to Garrison and Vaughn (2008): “Blended learning integrates in-class, face-to-face learning with online learning in a purposeful, thoughtful and complementary way to enhance student engagement.” Scholars agree that these terms are becoming much more blurred as on-campus courses rely more and more on the material, activities and multimedia learning objects that are accessed through the learning management system.

For the purposes of this report, the terms online education, online learning and online courses and programs mean that students are not required to come to campus or to meet in person with the instructor except to write the final exam or, in the case of some graduate and professional programs, to participate in intensive on-site modules as introductory or capstone learning experiences. Occasionally, the term fully online is used for emphasis, but when used in this report, the word “online” means fully online.

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### Online Programs at Queen’s (2018)

##### Faculty of Arts and Science

* 1. Bachelor of Arts, Psychology
  2. Bachelor of Arts, Global Development Studies
  3. Bachelor of Science, Life Studies (General)
  4. Bachelor of Arts, English
  5. Bachelor of Arts, History
  6. Bachelor of Arts, Liberal Studies
  7. Certificate in Academic Writing
  8. Certificate in Employment Relations
  9. Certificate in Media Studies
  10. Certificate in Global Action and Engagement
  11. Certificate in French for Professionals
  12. Certificate in Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Creativity
  13. Master in Earth and Energy Resource leadership

##### Faculty of Health Sciences

* 1. Bachelor of Health Sciences
  2. Graduate Diploma in Aging and Health
  3. Master of Science in Aging and Health
  4. Master of Science in Healthcare Quality
  5. Master of Nursing
  6. Doctor of Philosophy in Health Quality
  7. Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing
  8. Doctoral of Science in Rehabilitation Therapy
  9. Doctor of Philosophy in Aging and Health

##### Faculty of Education

* 1. Graduate Diploma in Professional Inquiry
  2. Professional Master in Education
  3. Certificate for International Education Professionals
  4. Professional Editing Standards Certificate (non-credit)
  5. Master of Education in World Indigenous Studies in Education (blended)

##### Faulty of Law

* 1. Undergraduate Certificate in Law
  2. Graduate Diploma in Legal Management Services

##### Smith School of Business

* 1. Certificate in Business (not fully online, but half of requirements are online courses)
  2. Executive MBA – National Program
  3. Executive MBA Americas – A Cornell-Queen’s Partnership

##### Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science

* 1. Gradate Diploma in Social Performance Management in the Extractive Industries
  2. Bachelor of Mining Engineering Technology
  3. Undergraduate Certificate in Mining Technologies

### Principles of Digital Planning

* **Vision Alignment:** Our digital strategy’s goals and resource allocations will be aligned with Queen’s vision for the student learning experience and research prominence and address university-wide and faculty-specific priorities.
* **Community:** We envision a digital future driven by our community – a future that enhances human experiences and Queen’s sense of community, on campus and around the world.
* **Openness:** We will leverage digital opportunities to bring Queen’s learning opportunities and research to the world and the world to Queen’s, fully respecting privacy and ethics.
* **Inclusion:** Our digital environment will be designed with diversity and equitable access in mind and will address the needs of all disciplines and areas of study.
* **Innovation:** We will leverage advances in technology with a digital strategy that is adaptable over time and supports the creativity already evident in Queen’s teaching and research.
* **Collaboration:** Innovation and collaboration go hand-in-hand – we need to optimize strengths across and outside the university to enable the agility, efficiency and interoperability required for pervasive digital strength.
* **Data as a Foundation:** Our community has said that the ability to access and manipulate all kinds of data – whether designing services or doing research – is a high need and a significant concern. This must drive the priorities we set.

For more information, see the Digital Planning website