

# L&T REX #24 : Divide a class into two groups to enhance student engagement

## Speakers

- LEGRAND Céline
- BURLAT Claire

## Key take aways of the session

### What does that mean?

In the video Claire and Céline explain in detail the way they splitted up their groups to face some in class challenges. There are many ways to split up classes, from one sequence only to many sequences if not all sequences.

- Total splitting is when the whole course is dividing the class group in two groups. These groups alternate with face to face timings with the professor and time when they are assigned a task, asynchronously or synchronously with those being in class with the professor
- Partial splitting can cover very various formats on a very creative manner (1 sequence, within a sequence, several sequences of the whole course....synchronous, asynchronous...)

Example 1	Example 2	Example format 3
In one sequence of 2 hours Plenary time altogether Half a group working with the professor Half a group working independently (in groups or individually) Wrap up in plenary	Total splitting of the class on one or several sequences Half a group with a teacher during 1 hour Half a group working independently (in group or individually)	All the 24h course is splitted 12 hours with the professor 12 hours autonomously

Note – For students working in apprenticeship, all students MUST be on site when working autonomously.

### Pedagogical take aways

This format is very challenging from a pedagogical perspective

#### Time consuming for the professor

The more sequences are splitted, the more organised and well designed the sequences need to be. Indeed main concern is to keep equity in the pedagogical storytelling for the students even if they don't have the same order in the sessions they have

In order to do so, it is critical for the professor to :

- consider the bits when students need to work autonomously

- analyse during course design phase how much there are or not consequences on learning path and course logic.

#### Needing a very deep reflexive design phase

Professor must ensure that at any moment of the learning process, any student has received the needed content and instructions to be able to work and not being lost. It is even more critical for the autonomous phases. Each half group learning storytelling must be designed this way and ensure equity.

The professor also needs to really focus and think about the parts where he **MUST** be present with the students. Sometimes, explaining **complicated concepts** is easier in smaller groups than in big groups. Sometimes, for more mature students, it is interesting to have the course splitted when **interactivity and collaborative work** is needed. It depends on the learning objective.

These situations tend to demonstrate the flexibility needed from the professor posture. Indeed, she/he has to make a perfect balance, adjust the course storytelling and “divided moments” considering these following variables :

- Student maturity,
- Complexity of concepts taught
- Need of group work facilitation

#### Communication to students

The other reason why it is time consuming is that the professor needs to anticipate everything and address every week specific communications to each group in order to avoid any misunderstanding or agenda crash.

#### Other critical points

- Make sure to have clear instructions to any kind of autonomous work and provide related material in advance
- Make sure that students send a summary or an assignment of the work they have done independently – to be kept in mind when designing assessments

Additional information – to go further about autonomy / working in groups.

#### [About working in small groups for students](#)

About how to keep motivation of students in a context of distance learning (this is somehow the case in the situation described by Céline and Claire) :

<https://corpus.ulaval.ca/entities/publication/7930faca-7e8e-4280-9e4e-80d021bfe1df>

About autonomous- supportive teaching

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00461520.2020.1862657>