

August 30, 2021

The CSE DEI Working Group on Effective Office Hours conducted a survey of declared CS and DS students, asking them for their feedback on what mode of office hours works best for them. The survey was conducted from August 19 to 26, and it was incentivized by giving respondents the option of entering into a drawing for one of four \$50 gift cards. We received a total of 299 responses during that time period.

The survey asked each student which courses they had taken out of 16 large CS courses. For each course, it asked whether they had taken the course in an in-person or virtual/hybrid format, and whether they preferred in-person, hybrid, or purely virtual office hours for that course. We also asked what they perceived to be the benefit of each modality.

Below is a summary of the data from the survey. Overall, regardless of the modality in which students originally took a course, they strongly preferred a hybrid option for office hours. **Thus, we recommend that courses provide both in-person and virtual options for office hours for the fall semester, subject to the comfort level of the teaching staff.**

Modality preference from all students, across all courses that they have taken:

Only virtual	310
hybrid	1,017
in-person	229

Modality preference from students who had taken the courses in person:

only virtual	79
hybrid	510
in-person	169

Modality preference from students who had taken the courses in a virtual/hybrid format:

only virtual	231
hybrid	507
in-person	60

These preferences did not differ by course:

Course Modality	OH Pref	ENGR 101	ENGR 151	EECS 183	EECS 203	EECS 280	EECS 281	EECS 370	EECS 376	EECS 388	EECS 442	EECS 445	EECS 481	EECS 482	EECS 484	EECS 485	EECS 493
Took the course in the virtual/hybrid format	only virtual	10	3	5	30	41	40	20	26	3	3	5	6	5	6	15	10
	hybrid	14	7	6	58	69	76	65	51	22	9	19	15	24	16	37	16
	in-person	1	0	0	7	7	11	8	6	4	1	4	4	1	1	5	0
Took the course in person	only virtual	7	1	9	13	12	8	6	8	3	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
	hybrid	44	13	41	88	101	64	53	32	17	2	8	3	4	7	18	2
	in-person	9	5	28	27	29	19	12	17	2	1	7	0	4	2	5	1
All students regardless of which modality they took the course	only virtual	17	4	14	43	53	48	26	34	6	3	6	7	6	6	16	11
	hybrid	58	20	47	146	170	140	118	83	39	11	27	18	28	23	55	18
	in-person	10	5	28	34	36	30	20	23	6	2	11	4	5	3	10	1

Benefits of In-Person Office Hours

Easier to collaborate with others	221
Easier to understand content	144
More inclusive	87
Sense of community/feeling connected	5
Easier to ask questions	4
Can hear others' questions	3
More engaging	2
Less people/less busy	2

Benefits of Virtual Office Hours

Location flexibility	259
Better for my schedule	231
More inclusive	58
Easier to understand content	29
Screen sharing to share/debug code	9
Able to do work while you wait/less anxious waiting environment	8
More likely to go when virtual	2
More structured and organized	2
Accommodates more people	1
Not having to worry about peer pressure	1

Additional quotes from students:

“As a general trend, I think that office hours for coding classes are generally well-suited for virtual office hours while office hours for theory classes are better suited for in-person. Additionally, I think that in the very early courses (ENG 101, EECS 183, 203, 280), having office hours as a means to make personal connections is an incredibly valuable experience to have as a freshman/sophomore while you are still deciding about your major.”

“I definitely like the flexibility of online office hours, but I really appreciate the level of engagement with in person office hours. I have found both useful in different classes, so I think maintaining a hybrid style would be helpful to accommodate everyone.”

Please direct any questions to Amir Kamil (akamil@umich.edu) or Sarah Snay (ssnay@umich.edu).