Jisc Advice

Developing blended learning approaches

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What is blended learning?

Blended learning provides a combination of face-to-face learning and dynamic digital activities and content that facilitate anytime/anyplace learning.

With so many digital technologies available on both proprietary and free-to-use platforms, developing blended learning approaches can seem like a daunting task. Finding the right approach that meets the needs of your learners is challenging at a time when practitioners are increasingly being asked to do more with less.

How does this differ from hybrid learning?

As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic the majority of UK universities and colleges plan to offer some onsite teaching, but have also moved to a greater use of digital delivery. The terms hybrid learning and online learning are being used more and carry an added layer of nuance at present.

The QAA has published a useful 'taxonomy for digital learning' [https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/news/qaa-publishes-building-a-taxonomy-for-digital-learning] that clarifies these terms and helps students understand what kind of experience they are likely to receive in the 'new normal.' For many, there is a degree of fluidity between the terms blended learning and hybrid learning and they are often used interchangeably. However, hybrid learning is often used where the students themselves have a greater degree of choice as to how they engage with their learning and can move between onsite and remote delivery seamlessly.

What you can do

You need to know what platforms are available and how they support teaching and learning effectively. What do you want your learners to do? How do digital tools and techniques help learners to achieve the learning outcomes?

Make your content accessible and engaging

Enriching blended learning content with appropriate images, audio and video can add variety and impact. Make sure your digital content is copyright-friendly. Our inspiring learning blog includes a **post on copyright-free resources**

[https://inspiringlearning.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2017/08/seven-sites-sourcing-free-use-images/] .

Accessible practice builds-in quality and provides benefits for all. Our **blog post about keeping accessibility in mind** [https://coronavirus.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2020/03/26/keeping-accessibility-in-mind/] provides quick tips for ensuring your resources can be used by all learners. For more ideas, see the advice we prepared with the National Deaf Children's Society about **including learners who are deaf or hard of hearing** [https://www.ndcs.org.uk/blog/how-to-provide-inclusive-online-learning-for-deaf-children/] .

Change your presentation style

You might want to start by taking a look at how you plan and deliver presentations. We share **some of our favourite tools and techniques for making presentations interactive, engaging and accessible for the audience** [https://coronavirus.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2020/04/08/webinars-online-classes-and-meetings-from-yawn-to-yay/] in a post on our Responding to Coronavirus blog.

Use collaboration tools

Many blended learning approaches are complemented by having backchannels where learners can collaborate more informally outside of contact time, whether it's sharing ideas via Twitter hashtags or peer networking in social spaces using their own devices.

The film below shows how this has improved learner engagement and support at **Basingstoke College of Technology (BCOT)** [http://www.bcot.ac.uk/] .

UCISA have produced the **Social Media Toolkit: a practical guide to achieving benefits and managing risks** [https://www.ucisa.ac.uk/-/media/Files/UCISA/Publication-files/TOOLKITS/2015/Social_media_toolkit.pdf?la=en] to provide further guidance on how social media can be used with learners.

Get learners involved

Involve your learners in all aspects of developing your blended learning approach. More ideas for including students are available on the **Change Agents Network blog** [https://can.jiscinvolve.org/wp/] . Involving learners provides you with reassurance that your

content meets their needs.

Experience it for yourself

Experiencing blended learning first-hand is also a good way to pick up handy tips and tricks from others.

There are many free online learning courses that provide an excellent overview of this topic, such as the **blended learning essentials MOOC on FutureLearn** [https://www.futurelearn.com/programs/blended-learning-essentials] , delivered by the University of Leeds. Or choose another free course from the **Open University** [https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses] or **Coursera** [https://www.coursera.org/] that covers a personal interest and enjoy being a learner again!

How we can support you

Designing the student experience is at the heart of blended learning.

Our **advice and guidance** [https://www.jisc.ac.uk/consultancy] helps you develop a strategic approach to combining digital and traditional techniques – so you can put blended learning into practice, while our **accessibility guidance and community resources** [https://www.jisc.ac.uk/accessibility] can also support you in ensuring blended learning resources and experiences are as accessible as possible.

Contact your **dedicated Jisc account manager** [https://www.jisc.ac.uk/contact/your-account-manager] for further information.

Explore more on this topic

(Learning and research resources)   (Accessibility)   (Content)   (Online learning)

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