The Context of Blended Learning
Defining “Blended Learning”
“Blended Learning” lacks a unified definition. There are a variety of definitions, all addressing different aspects of instruction. Therefore, blended learning exists on a continuum between 100% face-to-face & 100% online for delivery of instruction, student engagement, and access to course materials.
From *The Handbook of Blended Learning*, Curtis J. Bonk & Charles R. Graham:
Blended learning systems combine face to face instruction with computer-mediated instruction.

**iNACOL:**
Combining online delivery of educational content with the best features of classroom interaction and live instruction to *personalize* learning, allow thoughtful *reflection*, and *differentiate* instruction from student-to-student across a diverse group of learners.
Common threads:

• Combination of teaching strategies
• Combination of delivery media
• Combination of online and face-to-face instruction
• Combination of student activities online and in class
What Hybrid/Blended Courses Are Not

Not traditional “distance education” courses
  • Not entirely online

Not simply traditional classes with a website
  • Online time *replaces* some classroom time

Not just transferring information to the Web
  • Involves an extensive course redesign

So today we’ll try something new. Let’s try 2 scoops of blog, 3 cups of face to face, a good dose of RSS, a couple of DVDs and a roll of movie film. Blend for about two weeks and …

Excuse me Bruce… Will this make me fat?
Blended Learning is an approach to course design that meaningfully brings together the best of both face-to-face & online learning. It is not intended to supplant either of these individual approaches, rather to build from each to create a new, more effective learning experience for students.

At its heart, great blended learning course design will seek to leverage that which is best done in-person (debates; group presentations; reflexive response/thought) in combination with that which is best done online (provision of content; deeper, reflective discourse; document management & organization).
Multiple instructional modalities address the different learning levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy.
Impact on Teaching and Learning:

More flexible course format
  • More possibilities for content delivery; increased access to materials

More student and learning centered
  • Less listening and more performance

More interaction and discussion
  • Greater engagement with students

More student accountability for own learning
  • Instructors can document and examine student work more efficiently online
Two Models of Blended Course Design:

The **supplemental or enhancement model** retains the basic structure of the traditional course and:
- supplements lectures and textbooks with technology-based, out-of-class activities

The **replacement model** reduces the number of in-class meetings and:
- replaces some in-class time with out-of-class, online, interactive learning activities (seat time reduction)
- makes significant changes in remaining in-class meetings
Building Your Blend
Before You Blend

You will need to know:

• How to facilitate & manage online interaction
• How to assess students’ online work
• How to integrate online and face-to-face teaching
• How to use the technology
• That you must get started **early**

*Redesign requires more time than is often anticipated.*
Tip 1: Take it easy

There is no single standard approach to a Hybrid/Blended course.

Start early and produce concrete learning modules.

Redesign is an incremental process.
  • Experiment and learn as you go.
  • Keep it simple.
✓ Tip 2: Focus on design, not technology

Avoid the “course and a half syndrome.”

Don’t overload the course (cognitive overload).

Focus on the integration of the online and face-to-face components.
TIP: Conceptualize Your Approach

Content modules: “Chunking your course”
Blend with Purpose: Intentional Design
What works best?
How do professionals in the discipline work at a distance?
  • Communicate
  • Collaborate
What works well online? Face-to-face?
Tip 3: Use the resources already available

Search for discipline-specific websites.

Check out OER resources and learning object repositories.

Look for publisher content.

Take advantage of online help materials such as facilitation of group work, managing discussion forums, etc.
TIP: Rethink Content Presentation

- Deliver basic information about the course and the used technology/tools (course information and course schedule)
- Get to know each other
- Establish learning groups and rules for group work
- Present group work spaces
- Carry out exams and evaluations
- “Attend” a virtual performance, presentation, training session by an expert in the field
- Assess practical skills such as counselor-client or nurse-patient interactions
- Use blogs to reflect on learning experiences
- Create a threaded discussion for learners to access after training lets them stay in touch with classmates to ask questions, share insights, and post resources
- Provide a list of available resources for additional information on a topic of study
- Access experts (via video, podcast, chat, etc.) who are unable to attend a classroom session
- Complete “pre-work” (readings with quizzes, case studies, team discussions, study modules, videos, etc.) to prepare students for a new module or unit
- Multimedia course elements as alternative to or extension of lecture
Tip 4: Don’t go it alone

Talk with and get advice from experienced Hybrid/Blended course instructors (mentors).

Discuss your problems and progress with colleagues, whether they are using the model or not.

Get feedback and support from your campus instructional design professionals.
Tip 5: Manage your students’ expectations

Clearly explain and justify format of course and assignments.

Make sure that students understand connection between work delivered online and in class.

Make all assignments and other course expectations as explicit as possible right from the start.
Use the LMS for asynchronous interaction between instructor and student.

- Virtual Office Hours
- Provide feedback to students
- Demonstrate concepts in synchronous online sessions
- Private, archived communication
- Public “raise-your-hand” discussions
✗ Tip 6: Prepare for anticipated problems

Prefer simpler technologies to reduce risk and complications.

Break down and phase in longer assignments.

Provide time management tips for students.

Be very clear about what students are expected to do, and how you will grade them.

Identify places to go for live help.
Consistency in design creates:

- smooth navigation for students
- less anxiety for them
- more efficient time on task
Tip 7: The little things count!

Things *will* occasionally go wrong; plan carefully and be flexible about making adjustments where needed.

Ask for feedback from your students often and take their responses seriously.

Don’t organize too tightly; build in flexibility.

During the course, stay current and keep copies of everything.
Leverage 3rd Party Tools*

*Leveraging 3rd party tools is examined in detail in Module 3
Evaluating Students in a Blended Course
Assessing Students

**Diagnostic**
- used to determine each learner's starting level of achievement
- measure student abilities on any pre-requisite skills
- should not contribute towards the final overall grade in a course

**Formative**
- used to assist and encourage the growth process
- should provide an opportunity for learners to experiment, to ask questions, to take risks, to receive analytical feedback
- should not contribute significantly towards the overall final grade in the course
Assessing Students

**Summative**
- measures achievement relative to the course objectives
- may be an exam, a unit test, an assignment, a performance, etc.
- does count significantly in the final grade

**Self-Assessment or Peer Assessment**
- encourages all learners to accurately judge their own work, or that of their peers
- provides a powerful feedback tool to the student about the quality of their own performance
- should not contribute significantly towards the overall final grade in the course
Tips for Assessment

• Formative assessment is episodic (i.e. weekly).
• Multiple experiences contribute to student grades.
• Use of rubrics for objective assessment.
• Consider how professionals in the field are evaluated.
• Draw on knowledge “constructed” in the classroom.
• Episodic assessments outweigh mid-term/final (60/40).
Tools for Assessment

Online Evaluation Tools
- multiple choice tests, short answer, essays
- timed: access, duration of exam
- multiple attempts, question pools, randomization
- self-graded quizzes
- surveys or polls as “snapshot” of classroom understanding

Publisher-created Assessments
- aligned with text and learning objectives
- question pools are organized by category, level of difficulty, chapter

Portfolios (project-based evaluation)
- showcase student work
- demonstrate growth over time
Providing Feedback

**Automatic**
- multiple choice, short answer, multiple attempts
- publisher content – unlimited practice
- student can self-diagnose

**Rubrics**
- efficient, objective
- clarifies expectations and the level of performance

**Private/Archived/Ongoing**
- students see only their own feedback
- visible to student in a variety of ways