Blended Learning Overview (1)

The Blended Recipe

It's difficult to get the "Blended Course Recipe" exactly right the first time, but with feedback, reflection and practice, blended classes can be highly successful for student learning. Two of the biggest errors when creating a blended course are:

1. **Overloading students** with a great deal more work than they would have in either a completely face-to face (*F2F*) or fully online course, which is known as the "course and one-half syndrome."

2. **Not giving clear directions** about what will be accomplished in each mode and how to coordinate the two:

   A. Review the F2F version of your course and determine what aspects would be best delivered in person and be able to explain your rational. Place the discussion of the most complex material F2F.

   B. Find the weakest points in your teaching experience as you see them and consider how they may be best enhanced with online activities and resources.

Blending with a Purpose

KEY CONCEPT

At the heart of blended learning is the goal to engage students in critical discourse and reflection. A blended course should establish a community of inquiry where students take responsibility to construct meaning and confirm understanding through active participation in the inquiry process. A blended model of delivery means connecting the time spent in class seamlessly with the time spent online in a way that establishes a pattern for inquiry and learning each week.

Some Basic Tips

- **The first class should always be F2F (if possible)**, so students can be prepared for the blended format—it's advisable to set the date and time parameters of your blended hours in advance and clarify this with students on the first day to finalize the schedule and to explain to students how you will use components of FOL in relation to your course.

- **Define how your blended class operates in a supplementary syllabus** and clarify expectations with regard to participation in online and F2F activities, such as:

  o Explain how the weeks work in tandem as a fully integrated course.

  o If applicable, be clear about how participation grades are to be divided and calculated for both format — are they separately graded? Do students have to participate in both or only online activities?

  o Specify on your syllabus in a graphical manner (i.e. with bold font or through other means) those weeks in which the class meets F2F and what, if any, online activities will be expected for those same weeks.

  o Post your supplementary syllabus online and ask students to bring a copy to your first meeting (or bring copies) to highlight the core components of your blended class, especially if the blended hour occurs before the lecture hour.

- **Address the transition between online and F2F meetings**. Having students complete a task online before and/or after a F2F meeting (such as a discussion post within 48 hrs.) serves to integrate the two modalities and shows students they are connected components for the same course.

- **Consider the pacing and time of course activities** so that the course "fits" into the same time frame as a purely F2F course.

- **Avoid scheduling all of your in-class time to lecturing** — it's valuable time to explore shared ideas, gauge understanding and provide an alternative to a totally online discussion forum.

- **Provide regular communication** (using the Announcements tool in FOL) to highlight activities and transitions for F2F meetings. Sometimes students in a hybrid class tend to perceive online weeks as "time off."

- **Use the Calendar tool in FOL** and preload all of the scheduled F2F meetings and assignment due dates.

- **Regularly use and update your grade book** to allow students to view their progress and encourage attendance in F2F meetings. Regular formative feedback also helps to encourage participation and presence in the virtual hour.

- **Considering using the survey tool in FOL to solicit personal feedback** about your blended course at the end and identify any areas of improvement.

Additional Resources

- [Blended Learning Toolkit](#) from the *University of Central Florida*
- [Best Practices for Designing Blended Courses](#) from the *University of Waterloo*
- [Blended and Online Teaching Program](#) from *Carleton University*
- [Designing a Blended Course](#) from *Concordia University*

Text Recommendations

Garrison, D. R., & Vaughan, N. (2008). [Blended Learning in Higher Education: Framework, Principles, and Guidelines](#). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Vaughan N. (2014). [Student engagement and blended learning: Making the assessment connection](#). Education Sciences, 4(4), 247-264.

Bates, A.W (Tony). (2015). [Teaching in a Digital Age: Guidelines for Teaching and Learning](#). Tony Bates Associates Ltd.