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Pedagogical templates for e-learning

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EDITORIAL

Higher Education courses are making increasing use of technology, and demonstrating a great variety of ways of using technologies for learning. This very variety can be daunting for those wanting to get started in using e-learning. As one measure to assist the further development of e-learning within the Institute of Education, London (IoE), we used the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund allocation 2005/6 to fund four projects intended to generate a set of practical tools and resources to support a faster and more coherent integration of technology in the teaching and learning activities at the IoE. These four projects set out to:

- develop pedagogical templates for e-learning
- develop a database of case studies of ongoing IoE e-learning courses
- carry out a staff training needs analysis
- develop guidelines for the evaluation of on-line courses.

This present document reports on the first project – Pedagogical Templates – which aimed to create templates for the integration of technology into learning and teaching.

To create these templates we first examined present practice at the IoE, through interviewing course leaders and looking at their course designs, and then secondly expanded this through an examination of the course design literature.

It is hoped that this report will help tutors new to e-learning get an overview of how they might relate technology to their course design, and so sketch out the basics of the course architecture before having to start to plan the details of use of specific technologies and activities.

Side by side with this report on pedagogic templates, the Learning Technologies Unit has developed the E-Learning Case Studies web-site listing 40 IoE e-learning courses, with detailed case studies of 13, see: www.lkl.ac.uk/ltu/ELCS

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PEDAGOGICAL TEMPLATES FOR E-LEARNING

Magdalena Jara and Fitri Mohamad

Introduction

This report describes a series of pedagogic templates for the integration of technology into teaching and learning,derived from a consideration of present Institute of Education, London (IoE) practice and a selective literature review.

The main objective of this report is to provide an overview for IoE academics who are interested in integrating e-learning into their courses. This report has been designed to guide practitioners on how e-learning can be used in the context of a course, and the description of each template focuses on the pedagogical aspects of using e-learning.

These 'pedagogical templates' are descriptions of models of how technology can be integrated into teaching and learning activities. These templates do not attempt to cover the full range of possibilities nor to consider all variables, but rather to provide a means by which academic staff can obtain an overview of some of the distinctive ways in which it is possible to integrate technology in teaching and learning and the pedagogical rationales that lie behind each option (though this document does not attempt to set out the theoretical underpinnings of any of these approaches).

The goal of this set of templates is to help academic staff who are starting to use learning technologies in their teaching and learning, by providing a structured and simplified overview of possible options. The aim is to facilitate the journey into using technology in teaching and learning rather than prescribing it or defining its limits.

The report

- reviews pedagogical models for integrating technology currently in use at IoE;
- reviews pedagogical models for integrating technology drawn from the literature and other higher education institutions;
- presents seven pedagogical templates for integrating technology in teaching and learning.

Pedagogical templates for integrating technology into teaching and learning

Currently there is an increasing demand on academics in Higher Education Institutions to use e-learning in their teaching and learning practice, based on the perceived potential benefits that the use of technology can bring to teaching and learning. Building on the DfES e-strategy (DfES 2005) the HEFCE E-learning Strategy states:

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[we] aim to support the HE sector as it moves towards embedding e-learning appropriately, using technology to transform higher education into a more student-focused and flexible system, as part of lifelong learning for all who can benefit. (HEFCE, 2005)

As part of the implementation of this strategy, the pedagogy strand of the JISC E-learning Programme has tried to map "the possibility of modelling learning and e-learning in more systematic terms" (Beetham, 2004). This work is focused on 'practice models' defined as descriptions aiming to guide or prescribe specific approaches that practitioners can adopt. Popular models include Salmon's five step model, Laurillard's conversational model, and the CSAL Networked model. This work has the greatest potential for use by staff who already have some experience of e-learning, and are in a position to use the tools for effective learning design, whereas our goal in this report is to present templates for staff with little or no previous experience in the use of technology, or e-learning.

This present report aims to provide staff with: a) a first map of the possible ways in which technology can be used in teaching and learning – and b) guidelines as to the kind of decisions and steps needed to implement each of these ways.

We have set out to present a small number of templates that would show the range of alternatives of using technology in a course, the final selection being a balance between being manageable and being representative of the full range of possibilities. In order to produce this group of templates two reviews were carried out: firstly of models in current use at the IoE and secondly of the wider range of models reported in the literature.

Use of technology in IoE courses

Currently the IoE has four fully distance education programmes of study which use a virtual learning environment. These are: MA in Geography by distance learning, MA TESOL by distance learning, MA in Applied Educational Leadership and Management and MA in Citizenship and History.

There are also three additional programmes that use a 'blended' or mixed mode approach, combining face-to-face teaching with online activities. These are the Primary PGCE Open Learning, the Master of Teaching and the MA in Media Education.

There are also a rather large number of individual modules forming part of an academic programme that are either fully or partially online, and this number has increased steadily since the introduction of Blackboard in 2005[1].

Reviewing the formats of courses and modules at the IoE, it is possible to establish a basic categorisation regarding their approaches to integrate technology:

- Fully online: Students are enrolled as distance learners, and content and support are provided through an online platform (such as a conferencing system or a VLE). Usually the content is provided in a printed form such as textbooks, and readings, as well as via access to the eLibrary.

- Blended learning or mixed mode: The course consists of a combination of face-to-face and online activities. In this category, courses present a variety of modalities in their structure and focus. Among the varieties observed are:

  - Online activities are the central element of the course, and face-to-face events are held to initiate or wrap up online processes.

  - Face-to-face sessions are the central element of the course and online tasks run in between sessions, as preparation for the face-to-face sessions or as follow up.

1 For a full list of courses and modules currently using technology at the IoE, see the TQEF project Showcases at www.lkl.ac.uk/ltu

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- Face-to-face sessions constitute the primary space for the teaching and learning activities, and the online component is used solely for managerial and administrative tasks, for example to provide electronic readings, to exchange documents, to submit assignments, etc.

Another distinction that should be highlighted in the above designs is whether the online elements in a course or module are compulsory or optional. clearly where a courses contains compulsory online elements there is a greater responsibility on the course team to ensure the use of reliable and supported software systems.

Pedagogical models in the literature

In the literature it is possible to find a number of frameworks which categorise the use of technology in teaching and learning in higher education. We have selected two of them as offering potentially useful categorisations for our purposes.

The first one is that presented by Mason (1998), who proposes a framework of three models spanning the variety of existing online courses. These three models are:

1 **Content + support model:** this model is based on traditional distance learning courses to which online support has been added. This is characterised by:

- Clear separation between content and support: content is usually provided in print form and tutoring is done by email or a conferencing system.
- Content tends to be static over time and support can be provided by tutors who are not necessarily the authors of the content.
- Courses often include some basic collaborative activity among students, peer commenting and/or online assessment.
- Main study activity is based on the content materials and so students might perceive the online activities as an add-on and this can generate tension with the study of the materials.
- When content is provided through web pages, the division (and tension) between content and support is reduced.
- As a general rule, the online component is not bigger than 20% of the course as a whole.

2 **Wrap around model:** this model includes those courses for which the materials, such as study guides, activities and discussions, are being prepared specially for the course and wrapped around existing materials (i.e. textbooks or CDs). The main features are:

- Courses tend to present a more resource-based approach to learning as students usually have more freedom to search and interpret course contents.
- The tutor's role is wider than in the previous model as more of the course content is created each time the course is run, through discussions and activities.
- Students interact with each other by email or through other asynchronous or synchronous tools, depending on the technology available.
- In this model, the online component is around 50% of the course.

3 **Integrated model:** this model represents a shift in course design and is purely online. Its main features are:

- The main part of the course takes place through discussion, accessing and processing information, carrying out tasks, and producing joint assignments.
- Contents are dynamic as they are mostly determined by the group activity, with the support of learning resources.
- There is no distinction between content and support, and the course is dependent on the creation of a learning community.

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- This model features courses that are fully online.

Mason's thinking is rooted in her work at the Open University, and for the OU the main distinction is perhaps between **distance** and **online learning**. The term **distance learning** indicating no face-to-face teaching occurs and no online component either. The term **online learning** often implies learning at a distance, though it is also used to represent learning with a component of a face-to-face instruction. All three of Mason's models would fall into the category of 'fully online' as this category was used in our previous section describing IoE courses, as none of these models has a face-to-face component.

The most significant element of Mason's description is the distinction between content and support. Her first model is that of a distance learning course that has introduced some elements of technology, by offering support through email or a conferencing system. This move to use technology as a channel for support can be also observed nowadays in face-to-face courses, where additional support is offered by enabling email contact with the tutor.

A second framework which this time looks specifically at the integration of online components in support of campus-based courses is provided by Quinsee (2004). This framework is called the 3 stars incremental model, and is described below:

1* Foundation – Basic common model

- Every module has a web presence with module information, announcements, calendar, etc.

- Discussion forums are not moderated and other tools (e.g. blogs) might be available.

2* Integration – Intermediate content + communication model

Each module has a web presence as above to support face-to-face activities, but e-learning is more embedded in the course design to support more sophisticated learning and deeper discussion.

Learning resources are perhaps more developed, including lecturers' own materials, there are links to library and web resources.

Discussion forums are moderated and coursework is submitted electronically.

3* Innovation – Advanced and integrated model

All interaction can be undertaken online.

Content is given online in its entirety so students can study the module on a flexible basis. Many students still attend face-to-face workshops when they wish to gain further interaction with the tutors.

Each module has a comprehensive set of learning materials, including online assessments and activities, chat room events.

Students have access to their personal information pertaining to the course, such as module details, and individual assessment marks.

Tools for group working and peer support are fully utilised in the course activities.

These three models, drawn from the experience at City University, represent three levels of integration of online components into campus-based courses; they all would fall into the category of what we called 'blended' learning in our discussion of IoE courses. The three models presented by Quinsee have different emphases on the role of the face-to-face activities; in the first two models, face-to-face activities are treated as the core learning activities, while in the third model the online activities are treated as core with optional face-to-face workshops.

Pedagogical templates for integrating technology

From the above reviews a first draft of the pedagogical templates was created and presented to a group of experienced e-learning practitioners, who were then interviewed about their reactions to the templates. Arising from these interviews seven

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pedagogical templates were selected as reasonable representations to illustrate the range of technology integration options. These templates are briefly described in Table 2 below.

In order to present these templates we have broken up a course into a number of components, which we use as a structure to suggest how e-learning could be integrated into the course. A brief description of each course component is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 2 lists and gives a basic description of the seven pedagogical templates that have been created to represent the variety of approaches used in IoE.

These four blended templates range from B1, which is basically a face-to-face course where online tools are use to support some administrative tasks, to B4, which is an on-line model with some elements of face-to-face for specific purposes.

The three other templates (D1, D2 and D3) are positioned at the distance/online end of the axis as in these cases all aspects of the course are provided at a distance. In D1, the online support is combined with print-based distance education materials; D2 and D3

Table 1: Components of a course

Content	Refers to the information, concepts, skills, values or attitudes that constitute the core learning objectives of a course.
Learning activities	Refers to the activities planned and executed in the course. Learning activities could be of different types: in groups, individual, collaborative, discussions, etc.
Communication	Refers to the communications between tutors and students and among students themselves.
Learning resources	Refers to the materials and resources which are the key points of reference for the teaching and learning processes. For example books, manuals, journal articles, websites, videos, etc.
Assessment	Refers to any form of assessment created and implemented for the course to gauge students' level of achievement of the learning goals. This includes formative assessment or feedback.
Course administration	Refers to all aspects of course administration, including the management and coordination of all course components described in this list, for example scheduling learning activities, coordinating assessment and marking, distributing resources, registration of students, etc.
Course evaluation	Refers to the activities directed to review the quality of the teaching and learning in a course. This might take place at the end of the course delivery as an 'end of course student satisfaction survey', though it might (better) take place through embedded evaluation strategies along side course delivery.

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Table 2: E-learning pedagogical templates

	Name	Type	Basic description
B1	Online admin support	Blended[2]	Core learning activities and support are face-to-face. Administrative information (announcements, calendar), readings, materials, submission of assignments, and some support are provided online.
B2	Follow -up	Blended	Core learning activities and support are face-to-face. Additional online tasks and support are organised in between sessions as follow up or preparation for the sessions (e.g. to keep communication and focus in between sessions)
B3	Parallel	Blended	Learning activities run in parallel, some in the face-to-face sessions, others online.
B4	Face-to-face events	Blended	Core learning activities and support are online. Face-to-face events/workshops are held to initiate or wrap up online activities (e.g. at the start and half way through the course)
D1	Distance online support	Distance	Core learning activities are based around print-based distance learning materials. Student support and feedback is provided online.
D2	Online resource based	Distance	Core learning activities and support are online. Learning activities are organised around resources and materials.
D3	Online discussion based	Distance	Core learning activities and support are online. Learning activities are organised around discussions.

2 *The term 'blended' is used in this report to refer to a course or module which includes both face-to-face and distance/online elements.*

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Figure 1[3]

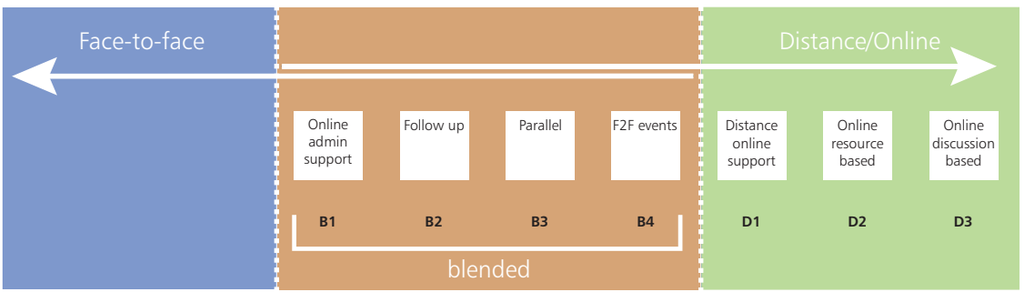

Table 3: Mapping pedagogical templates to components of a course

	TEMPLATES						
COURSE COMPONENTS	**Online admin support**	**Follow up**	**Parallel**	**F2F events**	**Distance online support**	**Online resource based**	**Online discussion based**
Content	F2F Online	F2F & Online	F2F & Online	F2F	Pack	Online	Online
Learning activities	F2F	F2F & Online	F2F & Online	F2F & Online	Pack	Online	Online
Communications	F2F & Online	F2F & Online	F2F & Online	F2F & Online	Online	Online	Online
Learning resources	F2F & Online	F2F & Online	F2F & Online	Online	Pack	Online	Online
Assessments and feedback	F2F	F2F	F2F & Online	Online	Online	Online	Online
Course administration	F2F & Online	F2F & Online	F2F & Online	Online	Online	Online	Online
Course evaluation	F2F & Online	F2F & Online	F2F & Online	Online	Online	Online	Online

Note:
F2F = Face-to-face *Pack = Usually print materials but may include other types (e.g. CD Rom)*

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represent fully online modes (where D2 concentrates learning activities on access to materials, and D3's emphasis is on communication among students).

In Table 3 we present an idealised view of the relationships between the components of a course and the pedagogical templates, indicating the mode most likely to be used for each element in each template.

Positioning these options along an axis with face-to-face and distance modes located at each end (see Figure 1) the first four templates (B1, B2, B3 and B4) can be located within the blended area, i.e. they include both online and face-to-face elements.

Descriptions of the pedagogical templates

The following sections describe each pedagogical template in turn, and present its main features giving examples, describing benefits and issues to consider when deciding to implement the template.

The decision to use one template or another will often be determined by the access needs of the students. A distance learning format is necessary if students are geographically distant and there are no real possibilities to bring them together physically in one location. Where students can come together and wish to do so, but they are in full-time employment, are very busy, or are scattered across a large geographical area then a blended learning format may be more suitable.

The examples given in the description of each template have been drawn from the information provided by IoE staff interviewed in this project, as well as from the practical experiences accumulated by the Learning Technologies Fellows at the IoE. In these descriptions we will often refer to the use of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) such as Blackboard or Moodle, and other complementary e-learning tools such as websites and e-portfolios. However, in particular courses or learning situations other context-specific tools might be easier to access, or be more appropriate.

3 Face-to-face mode, typically in the IoE, is characterised by students meeting with the teacher in the same class-room, although it could include meeting in the student's place of work or country. It can also include students who travel long distances to attend a residential course (as the case with students in the International EdD programme) Distance mode is characterised by the students and tutors being in different places while carrying out teaching and learning activities. Online mode is characterised by learning at a distance and where the main means of communication and interaction is done through learning technologies.

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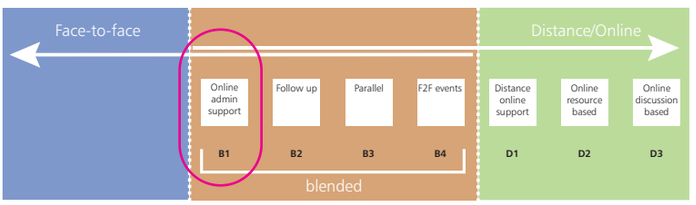
'Online admin support' template

Description



In this template, all core teaching and learning activities are conducted in regular face-to-face sessions with students. The administrative support for students associated with the teaching and learning activities is made available online, as a way to provide consistent support and just-in-time course updates. The degree to which this administrative support is provided online would depend on specific needs of the course.

A typical scenario might be a face-to-face module with an associated website or VLE space where:

1 The tutor can post announcements/reminders of relevant events, deadlines and news

2 Students can find electronic copies of course materials (readings, handbook, etc.)

3 Students can submit their assignments (or draft assignments) through an electronic drop-box.

In some cases, the online elements are created to supplement or backup course materials which are available in hardcopy. In other occasions, course administrative support is only available online, as a way to reduce paper use, strengthen the use of the online environment, and/or to minimise the time between getting a document ready and making it available to students.

Benefits

Tutors reported the following benefits when using a VLE in this way:

1 24/7 access to course resources and materials (e.g. if students lose the hardcopy version of a handout, they can always download another copy), which is also a reliable backup that can later be archived.

2 A one stop shop for all course materials, facilitating tutor's and administrator's job in keeping documents up-to-date.

3 A unitary (and coherent) channel of communication with students, as everyone sees the same information and documentation (through the calendar, contact details

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of participants, etc.) – and concentrating all course communications in one place, easing the amount of messages received in personal inboxes.

4 An immediate and simple channel of communicating with students, where tutors can notify students of changes to course materials, deadlines, etc.

5 Improved roster management as the VLE helps dealing with growing number of students. All messages are archived online, making it easy for new students who are joining the course at a later stage to catch up on course information and materials.

6 Improved and extended communication channels with other tutors and administrators (specially when tutors are distributed and collaborating in the same module/course), facilitating planning and coordination of tasks and events.

You should consider this approach if

- The students come weekly to the face-to-face sessions but they are not on campus the rest of the week and the course requires them to access information and/or resources which are essential for the following session (e.g. room numbers, events, readings).

- The course manages large number of resources and materials which are released gradually to students or that will be used selectively by different students.

Issues to consider when deciding to implement a course using this template

1 Student access – although students may benefit having online access to resources and information, tutors should consider whether all students have adequate Internet access throughout the duration of the course. For example, if a module requires students to access a reading material a day before a face-to-face session, then everyone in the course must be able to access the material in time before the face-to-face session begins. It is important therefore to check whether all students have adequate access to the Internet (and into the course VLE, if required).

2 Up-to-date information – it is very important that all online information (documents, links, etc.) is always up-to-date.

3 Systematic file management – it is very useful for tutors to have a space to keep all course documents, where files can be updated as necessary, archived at the end of the course, and modified for new cohorts. This requires tutors to maintain a systematic way of filing and labelling files, so course documents can be readily traced.

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4 Access and use of different file formats – tutors can use a variety of file formats to present their teaching and learning materials and activities (Word documents, PowerPoint slides, images, animations, video clips, audio files, etc.). Having them backed up in the VLE enables staff to access them directly during face-to-face sessions, and students to access them during and after the session without the paraphernalia of disks, CDs, DVDs or hard copies of presentations, etc. Tutors need to ensure students are aware of the plug-ins or players/readers (example: Adobe Acrobat reader to read pdf files), needed to access the files efficiently.

'Online admin support' template with examples of online components and corresponding VLE tools

COURSE COMPONENT	F2F	Pack (print, CD)	Online	VLE tools
Content	YES			
Learning Activities	YES			
Communications	YES		Frequently asked questions	Discussion spaces
Learning Resources	YES		Electronic copy of handbook/s readings, presentation List of websites and other online resources	Online file repository Publishing of information online
Assessments and feedback			Submission of draft/ final assignments	Online drop box
Course administration			Reminders of sessions, tasks, deadlines, assignment Announcements of events, seminars Contact information of tutors, students, administrators	Announcements Calendar Publishing of information online
Course evaluation			Student satisfaction survey	Online surveys

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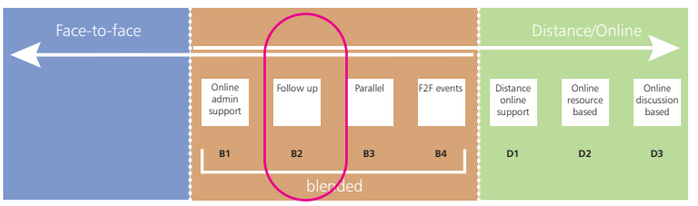
'Follow up' template

Description



In this template, core learning activities are carried out in face-to-face class sessions. However the online environment is created as a complementary learning space to facilitate some of the learning activities designed for the course. In this template, online activities usually serve as either preparatory or follow-up activities that directly plug-in into the face-to-face activities. The main reason to use a VLE is to maintain communication and the active engagement of students in-between sessions.

A typical scenario might be a face-to-face module where sessions run weekly, fortnightly or monthly and where the online environment is used to both support the administrative elements of the course (as in the Admin support template) and support learning in-between sessions, for example by:

1 Setting up individual or group tasks to prepare material for the upcoming face-to-face sessions.

2 Setting up discussion spaces where students can post questions and answers regarding preparatory readings, reports, assignments.

3 Students sharing their reflections/practice applications of materials worked during the face-to-face sessions.

Benefits
Tutors reported the following benefits when using a VLE in this way:

1 Ability to monitor of students' participation and progress in doing course work.

2 Improvement in the quality of use of face-to-face session time as students had prepared the materials (e.g. through discussions or questions and answers).

3 Improvement the use, application and reflection on the course materials and contents by allowing students

to reflect/apply them in the context of their work places after sessions.

4 PLUS the benefits noted for the use of the 'Admin support' template.

You should consider this approach if

- The student body is geographically distributed or work full time, but they are able to attend some face-to-face sessions or residential events.
- Contact with students is often lost during the period in-between sessions, making it difficult to maintain the sense of unity of the module.
- Students have a tendency to not carry out the tasks set between sessions as required, making face-to-face sessions more difficult to manage because of lack of student preparation.
- Students would benefit from sharing their work experiences and the application of the issues learnt in the sessions while they are away.

Issues to consider when deciding to implement a course using this template

In addition to the issues associated with the use of technology to support administrative elements of a course, it is important tutors consider these points:

1 Maintaining communication beyond classroom hours – opening a 24/7 channel to communicate with students means that tutors must ensure their students have reliable access to the internet throughout the course, and that they set into place procedures to deal with potential demands upon their own time (they are potentially expected to be on-call 24/7!).

2 Extending classroom discussions – discussion can go on both on-line and in the classroom, and one form can build on and continue the other. Tutors need to design activities that integrate both the online and face-to-face discussions, so that the benefit of taking part in both elements is clear to students.

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'Follow up' template with examples of online components and corresponding VLE tools

COURSE COMPONENT	F2F	Pack (print, CD)	Online	VLE tools
Content	YES			
Learning Activities	YES		Icebreaking activities Discussion around specific readings Sharing experiences, task outputs	Discussion spaces
Communications	YES		Frequently asked questions	Discussion spaces
Learning Resources	YES		Electronic copy of handbook/readings presentations List of website and other online resources Samples of student's projects from previous years Glossary of important key concepts	Online file repository Publishing of information online
Assessments and feedback			Submission of draft/ final assignments	Online drop box
Course administration			Reminders of sessions, tasks, deadlines, assignments Announcements of events, seminars. Contact information of tutors, students, administrators	Announcements Calendar Publishing of information online
Course evaluation			Student satisfaction survey	Online surveys

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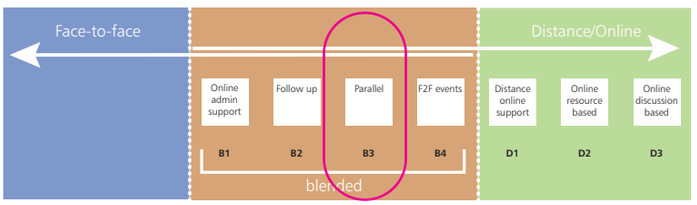
'Parallel' template

Description



In this template, the core learning activities are conducted both face-to-face and online as parallel and intertwined strands. For selected contents of the course, the VLE is used to provide supplementary learning space to accommodate to the nature of the course contents.

A typical scenario might be:

1 The course runs regular face-to-face sessions throughout the term.

2 In parallel with the face-to-face sessions, a series of learning activities are carried out online.

3 The choice of activities for each mode is made in such a way as to take advantage of the benefits of each mode. The use of the VLE is usually used for a limited (but carefully selected) number of learning activities.

Benefits

Tutors reported that working in this way gave them greater flexibility in teaching approaches, enabling them to improve the quality of the course and to match teaching more closely to student needs

Tutors reported the following benefits from the use of the online element of the course:

1 Provision of an alternative access to the course, especially in between class sessions.

2 Tutors can use a wider range of different media formats and learning activities.

3 Tutors can monitor students' engagement and progress in doing course work.

4 Reinforcing and consolidating the learning carried out online, as well as to expanding the face-to-face activities with online tasks.

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5 Improvement in motivation, communication and sense of community among students and tutors.

You should consider this approach if

- The students come weekly to the face-to-face sessions, however they feel session time is not always enough to carry out the core activities of the course.

- The course syllabus includes more than one strand of learning objectives which could be taught in parallel and there would be a benefit in working in this way.

- Students would benefit from sharing their work experiences and the discussion of the application of the issues discussed in the face-to-face sessions while they are in their work settings.

Issues to consider when deciding to implement a course using this template

To diversify teaching and learning activities integrating face-to-face and online modes of delivery is not an easy task. Tutors should consider:

1 Student access – tutors need to consider students' access to internet facilities, and it may be useful to make a list of technical requirements for accessing the course, and provide information to students about technical support. Tutors should provide alternative ways to communicate with students should they fail to participate on-line on regular basis.

2 Maintaining communication beyond classroom hours – opening a 24/7 channel to communicate with students means that tutors must ensure their students have reliable access to the internet throughout the course, and that they set into place procedures to deal with potential demands upon their own time (they are potentially expected to be on-call 24/7!).

3 The variety of teaching method afforded by this approach can lead to a very dynamic and active learning experience, both for the course tutors and the students, but this also means that this potentially a very time demanding approach to adopt.

4 Synchronising/integrating online and face-to-face instruction – the learning activities need to be carefully synchronised throughout the course, so they do not overlap with one another, making one merely a repetition of the other.

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'Parallel' template with examples of online components and corresponding VLE tools

COURSE COMPONENT	F2F	Pack (print, CD)	Online	VLE tools
Content	YES		Readings, presentations	Online file repository
Learning Activities	YES		Icebreaking activities Discussions/seminars around specific topics Share of experiences, task outputs	Discussion spaces
Communications	YES		Frequently asked questions	Discussion spaces
Learning Resources	YES		Electronic copy of handbook/ readings, presentations List of websites and other online resources Samples of student projects from previous years Glossary of important key concepts	Online file repository Publishing of information online
Assessments and feedback			Submission of draft/ final assignments	Online drop box
Course administration			Reminders of sessions, tasks, deadlines, assignments Announcements of events, seminars Contact information of tutors, students, administrators	Announcements Calendar Publishing of information online
Course evaluation			Student satisfaction survey	Online surveys

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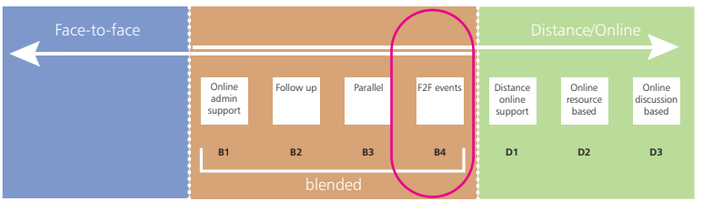
'Face-to-face events' template

Description



In this template, all core learning activities are conducted online. Only a few face-to-face meetings or workshops are carried out, for example at the start and mid-way through the course, perhaps to initiate and/or wrap-up online activities. The goals for the face-to-face events are very specific and limited

A typical scenario might be where the bulk of the teaching and learning are carried out online, and additionally face-to-face sessions and workshops are organised so that students could:

a) Work on some selected topics.

b) Build a sense of community among the students and tutors.

c) Practise some practical skills.

d) Wrap up online activities or discussions.

In this template, course resources and administrative support are primarily provided online.

Benefits

Tutors who have used this approach report the following advantages:

1 Improved motivation, communication and sense of community among students and tutors, as face-to-face sessions can help students and tutors to get to know each other better outside the online interactions.

2 Reinforcement and consolidation of the learning carried out online by very specific and intensive face-to-face activities.

3 Provides the possibility of creative design of learning activities as the tutor can use a range different media formats and learning activities to deliver the instructional content of the course.

4 Tutors can systematically monitor students' engagement and

progress in doing course work.

5 The process of managing documents, course calendar, and contact details of those involved in the course is simplified.

6 Provides the tool to coordinate communication between course tutors and students, and also among course tutors themselves (especially helpful if the course is shared with more than two tutors).

You should consider this approach if

- The students are geographically distributed, or they require high levels of flexibility in terms of their study time (e.g. they work full time, have family commitments, tend to be on the move) and for whom a mainly online course is the most appropriate format - facilitating their engagement with the activities with flexible timetables).

- The students can attend occasional face-to-face sessions (or residential events).

Issues to consider when deciding to implement a course using this template

1 Student access – tutors need to consider students' access to internet facilities, and it may be useful to make a list of technical requirements for accessing the course, and provide information to students about technical support. Tutors should provide alternative ways to communicate with students should they fail to participate on-line on regular basis Tutors should consider setting up back up strategies to access course materials, should the online environment fail. Tutors need to consider the needs of students with disabilities should have to be considered by tutors who may require specific assistance to enable their effective participation.

2 Face-to-face session planning – beyond the appropriate coordination of activities between online and face-to-face, in this template the face-to-face sessions should be carefully planned and delivered to take full advantage of the students and tutors physical presence.

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Face-to-face events' template with examples of online components and corresponding VLE tools

COURSE COMPONENT	F2F	Pack (print, CD)	Online	VLE tools
Content	YES		Readings, presentations	Online file repository
Learning Activities	YES		Icebreaking activities Discussions/seminars around specific topics Share of experiences, task outputs	Discussion spaces
Communications	YES		Frequently asked questions	Discussion spaces
Learning Resources			Electronic copy of handbook/ readings, presentations List of websites and other online resources Samples of student projects from previous years Glossary of important key concepts	Online file repository Publishing of information online
Assessments and feedback			Submission of draft/ final assignments	Online drop box
Course administration			Reminders of sessions, tasks, deadlines, assignments Announcements of events, seminars Contact information of tutors, students, administrators	Announcements Calendar Publishing of information online
Course evaluation			Student satisfaction survey	Online surveys

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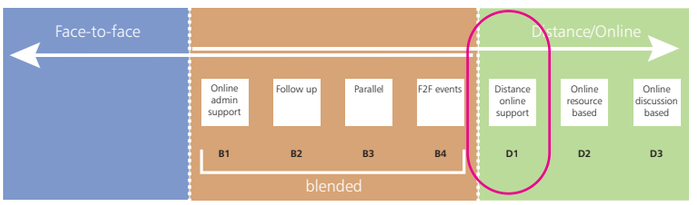
'Distance online support' template

Description



In this template, core learning activities are based around paper-based distance learning materials, i.e. students would usually receive a package of printed materials especially written and designed for the course that present the content of the course and describe the learning activities to be carried out. The package of materials may include other resources such as CDs, DVDs, and videos. The administrative and academic support for students associated with teaching and learning are made available online. There is no face-to-face component in this template.

A typical scenario might be that students carry out their learning activities at a distance using the materials provided in the packages sent to them, while the VLE would provide support as:

1 Main space for communication, particularly between tutors and students for feedback

2 Repository for all course materials (back up of all hardcopy learning packages)

3 Repository for all student assignments and projects.

Benefits

Tutors who have used this approach report the following advantages:

1 Easy and extended channel of communication for students and tutors, which otherwise is very limited as students are at a distance.

2 Presentation of all course support-related issues, information and materials within one space, for easy reference and updating.

3 One stop shop for all course materials, facilitating tutor's and administrator's work in keeping documents up-to-date.

4 Provision of a unitary (and coherent) channel of communication with students, as everyone sees the same

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information and documentation (through the calendar, contact details of participants, etc.) – and concentrating all course communications in one place, easing the amount of messages received in personal inboxes.

5 Compilation of all frequently asked questions and feedback posted throughout the course in one space, which can be used to improve activities and as a resource for future cohorts

6 Expansion of the types of resources that can be provided to students – adding websites, images, audio, video and other types of files made available in the VLE to the print-based materials.

7 Improvement in the management of course tasks and projects as students can upload their individual and group tasks and projects, as tutors have access to digital copies of all their work in one place. This archive can also be used as sample projects for future cohorts, helping new students to get an idea about the quality and standard of work expected from them.

You should consider this approach if

- The students are at a distance, usually working in isolation, and their learning experience would benefit from additional interaction with tutors and among students.

- A distance learning course uses resources which are not all ready before the start of the course, so they need to be delivered to students in multiple postings which is administratively very expensive.

- A distance learning course uses large number of resources and materials which are released gradually to students or that will be used selectively by different students.

Issues to consider when deciding to implement a course using this template

1 Student access – tutors need to consider students' access to internet facilities, and it may be useful to make a list of technical requirements for accessing the course, and provide information to students about technical support.

2 Up-to-date information - it is very important that all online information (documents, links, etc.) is always kept up-to-date.

3 Systematic file management – it is very useful for tutors to have a space to keep all course documents, where files can be updated as necessary, archived at the end of the course, and modified for new cohorts. This requires tutors to maintain a systematic way of filing and labelling files, so course documents can be readily traced.

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4 Access and use of different file formats – tutors can use a variety of file formats to present their teaching and learning materials and activities (Word documents, PowerPoint slides, images, animations, video clips, audio files, etc.). Tutors need to ensure students are aware of the plug-ins or players/ readers (example: Adobe Acrobat reader to read pdf files), needed to access the files efficiently.

5 Building a learning community among distance learners – as students do not have the opportunity to meet face-to-face, tutors may want to consider building 'get-to-know-you' online activities,so students can get acquainted with one another throughout the course. Learning activities can be varied, to provide ample opportunities for students to build a sense of 'learning community' using the online space.

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'Distance online support' template with examples of online components and corresponding VLE tools

COURSE COMPONENT	F2F	Pack (print, CD)	Online	VLE tools
Content		YES	Handbook, course study guides readings, presentations	Online file repository
Learning Activities		YES	Icebreaking activities, task discussions Share of experiences, task outputs	Discussion spaces
Communications			Frequently asked questions Feedback/input from tutors	Discussion spaces
Learning Resources		YES	Electronic copy of handbook/ readings, presentations List of websites and other online resources Samples of student projects from previous years Glossary of important key concepts	Online file repository Publishing of information online
Assessments and feedback		YES	Submission of draft/final assignments Feedback from tutors	Online drop box
Course administration			Reminders of tasks, deadlines, assignments Contact information of tutors, students, administrators	Announcements Calendar Publishing of information online
Course evaluation			Student satisfaction survey	Online surveys

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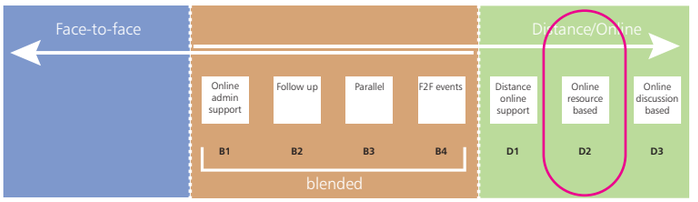
'Online resource based' template

Description



In this template, like the 'Online discussion based' template, all core teaching and learning activities are conducted online. The course is primarily an online course and learning activities are resource-based, i.e. students are expected to access multiple materials and resources as the core component of the learning activities. The VLE provides the online environment where students access the content and instructions for the learning activities, and access the necessary resources.

A typical scenario might be of a fully online course, where:

1 All learning activities, materials and resources are available online (in the VLE).

2 No face-to-face sessions are held.

3 The learning activities are designed around resources (readings, websites, etc.) which can be accessed online.

4 Some sharing and discussion of the activities carried out by students, and tutors' feedback are facilitated in the online space.

Benefits

Tutors who have used this approach report the following advantages:

1 Tutor and student access to all activities and resources of the course, making it simple to refer to and update at any time.

2 Provision of space for students to review their own progress in the course, and they are also able to ask, comment, and respond to any work posted by other students.

3 Tutors can systematically monitor students' engagement and progress in doing course work.

4 Simplification of the process of managing documents, course calendar, and contact details of everyone involved in the course.

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5 Compilation of frequently asked questions and feedback posted throughout the course in one space, which can be used to improve activities and as a resource for future cohort.

6 Provision of a unitary (and coherent) channel of communication with students, as everyone sees the same information and documentation (through the calendar, contact details of participants, etc.) – and concentrating all course communications in one place, easing the amount of messages received in personal inboxes.

7 Facilitation of learning activity design because it is possible to access a wide variety of resources.

8 Revision and improvement of learning activities and resources is enabled because tutors can easily revise content.

You should consider this approach if

- The students are geographically distributed, or they require high levels of flexibility in terms of their study time (e.g. they work full time, have family commitments, tend to be on the move) and for whom a mainly online course is the most appropriate format – facilitating their engagement with the activities with flexible timetables).

- The students work at different rates and so co-ordination of joint learning activities is difficult to achieve.

- The content of the course lends itself to resource based and/or individual study.

Issues to consider when deciding to implement a course using this template

1 Student access – as all core activities are delivered online, tutors need to be sure students have ample bandwidth and computing access to enable them to log in and use the VLE for their study. The use of different file formats will also require tutors to check with students to see if they are able to open and access the files from their personal computing facilities at home or work. It is useful to make a list of technical requirements for accessing the course, and sufficient information about any technical support should be made available to students.

2 Up-to-date information – tutors need to be sure that the information and materials put online are updated regularly.

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3 Building a learning community – if this element is a necessity for the course, tutors need to consider designing activities that will enable students to bond through the online medium. Because there is no face-to-face element students should be provided with ample opportunities to get to know one another through the VLE.

'Online resource based' template with examples of online components and corresponding VLE tools

COURSE COMPONENT	F2F	Pack (print, CD)	Online	VLE tools
Content			Handbook, course study guides, readings, presentations	Online file repository
Learning Activities			Icebreaking activities, task discussions Share of experiences, task outputs	Discussion spaces
Communications			Frequently asked questions Feedback/input from tutors	Discussion spaces
Learning Resources			Electronic copy of handbook/ readings, presentations List of websites and other online resources Samples of student projects from previous years Glossary of important key concepts	Online file repository Publishing of information online
Assessments and feedback			Submission of draft/ final assignments Feedback from tutors	Online drop box
Course administration			Reminders of tasks, deadlines, assignments Contact information of tutors, students, administrators	Announcements Calendar Publishing of information online
Course evaluation			Student satisfaction survey	Online survey

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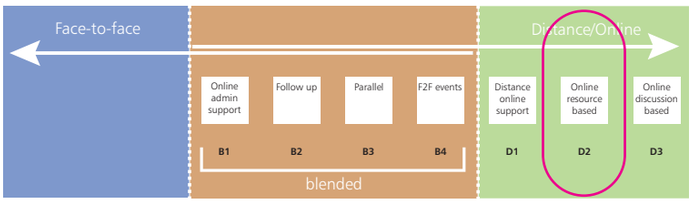
'Online discussion based' template

Description



In this template, like the 'Online resource based' template, all core teaching and learning activities are conducted online. The course is designed and built as a distance learning course, and it uses the VLE as the virtual classroom for all learning activities. The course uses the discussion format as its main instructional activity, and students are usually organised in groups.

A typical scenario might be a course that uses the VLE as the primary mode for teaching and learning:

1 All learning activities, materials and resources are online (in the VLE).

2 No face-to-face sessions are held.

3 The learning activities are designed around discussions among students led or monitored by tutors.

Benefits

Tutors who have used this approach report the following advantages:

1 Tutor and student access to all activities and resources of the course, making it simple to refer to and update at any time.

2 Provision of space for students to review their own progress in the course, and they are also able to ask, comment, and respond to any work posted by other students.

3 Tutors can systematically monitor students' engagement and progress in doing course work.

4 Simplification of the process of managing documents, course calendar, and contact details of everyone involved in the course.

5 Compilation of frequently asked questions and feedback posted throughout the course in one space, which can be used to improve activities and as a resource for future cohorts.

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6 Provision of a unitary (and coherent) channel of communication with students, as everyone sees the same information and documentation (through the calendar, contact details of participants, etc.) – and concentrating all course communications in one place, easing the amount of messages received in personal inboxes.

7 Facilitation of learning activity design because it is possible to access a wide variety of resources.

8 Revision and improvement of learning activities and resources is enabled because tutors can easily revise content

9 Use of the discussion boards as the primary tool for teaching and learning. The discussions can also be archived for future use.

You should consider this approach if

- The students are geographically distributed, or they require high levels of flexibility in terms of their study time (e.g. they work full time, have family commitments, tend to be on the move) and for whom a mainly online course is the most appropriate format – facilitating their engagement with the activities with flexible timetables).

- The content of the course lends itself to collaboration and learning from peers.

Issues to consider when deciding to implement a course using this template

1 Student access – as all core activities are delivered online, tutors need to be sure students have ample bandwidth and computing access to enable them to log in and use the VLE for their study. The use of different file formats will also require tutors to check with students to see if they are able to open and access the files from their personal computing facilities at home or work. It is useful to make a list of technical requirements for accessing the course, and sufficient information about any technical support should be made available to students.

2 Up-to-date information – tutors need to be sure that the information and materials put online are updated regularly.

3 Building a learning community – if this element is a necessity for the course, tutors need to consider designing activities that will enable students to bond through the online medium. Because there is no face-to-face element students should be provided with ample opportunities to get to know one another through the VLE.

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'Online Discussion-based' template with examples of online components and corresponding VLE tools

COURSE COMPONENT	F2F	Pack (print, CD)	Online	VLE tools
Content			Handbook, course study guides, readings, presentations	Online file repository
Learning Activities			Icebreaking activities, task discussions Share of experiences, task outputs	Discussion spaces
Communications			Frequently asked questions Feedback/input from tutors	Discussion spaces
Learning Resources			Electronic copy of handbook/ readings, presentations List of websites and other online resources Samples of student projects from previous years Glossary of important key concepts	Online file repository Publishing of information online
Assessments and feedback			Submission of draft/final assignments Feedback from tutors	Online drop box
Course administration			Reminders of tasks, deadlines, assignments Contact information of tutors, students, administrators	Announcements Calendar Publishing of information online
Course evaluation			Student satisfaction survey	Online surveys

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