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Student transitions to blended learning – challenges and solutions

Gearing Up 2017 Workshop

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Overview

- Definition of BL
- Student experiences of blended learning at UofG
- Activity: Challenges facing students at other institutions
- Activity: Solutions that could be (or are being) implemented at other institutions
- Summary discussion: Key points & how solutions may be implemented





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Definition of BL

“At its simplest, blended learning is the **thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences ...**

The real test of blended learning is the effective integration of the two main components (face-to-face and Internet technology) such that we are not just adding on to the existing dominant approach or method.”

(Garrison & Kanuka, 2004, p96-7)



Challenges of blended programmes at UofG

Exploratory study

Purposive and opportunistic sampling

Data reported verbatim and/or thematically analysed

Student Cohort	School A: (international postgraduates)	School B: (home undergraduate)	School C: (home/ international postgraduates)	Total
Method of data collection used	Focus group	End-of-course quality assurance survey*	Individual interview	
No. of participants (2014/15)	9	12		21
No. of participants (2015/16)			3	3
Total				24

*Survey modified to include questions pertinent to the study

Blended learner experience research at UofG

Generic	Home UG students	International PG students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time management• Lack of F2F contact<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sense of isolation• Perceived lack of communication• Feedback not immediate• Technical issues• Video quality (sound, resolution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of input from others in the group e.g. to online seminars• Variable access to reading materials• Assessment<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of clarity• Disliked reflective journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One semester too short to get used to online learning<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unless gone through GIC• Harder to learn new concepts online• Harder to ask questions online<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worrying about 'losing face' when asking questions online• Didn't come to UK to study 'online'• Teacher assumed prior knowledge

Challenges of blended programmes at UofG

Lack of clarity about assessment

Not getting all the information about essays and deadlines as we should have done- hand in date for essay was changed to be the same as the face-to-face course and we had been informed it was later than it actually was.

(Home undergraduate student)

Lack of face-to-face contact

Sometimes I feel alone because I want to discuss with my friend when we are having classes. But when I'm just watching those computer screens I feel lonely and helpless!

(International postgraduate student)

Technical issues

At first I think the video link is linked to YouTube, and I can click it on my Mac. But after two weeks the video link change and I can only open it on the university computers.

(International postgraduate student)

Challenges of blended programmes at UofG

One semester too short a time to adapt

He is more engaged in such a format of online course, I think partly because he's from GIC ... We don't have enough time to adapt to the teaching methods here ... we just have one year...

(International postgraduate student)

Time management

I have found it more difficult to motivate myself as it gets towards the end of the course and find myself focussing more on work I have to do for other [F2F] courses at the expense of Classics.

(Home undergraduate student)

Didn't come to UK to study online

When Chinese people come to the UK, we try to feel the culture here, to try for the face-to-face communication, not just watch the online, or why come here?

(International postgraduate student)



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Challenges

- In small groups, discuss the challenges facing students at your institution, in terms of their transition to blended learning

(10 minutes discussion,
5 minutes feedback)



Challenges of blended programmes in the literature

Generic	International students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invasion of personal time and space (Smyth et al., 2012)• Difficulty adjusting to learning independently<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time management, self-motivation (Marino, 2000, cited by Tsai et al 2000)• Limited interactions and differences in learning preferences are likely to result in dropouts (Tinto, 1975)• Technical problems (Concannon, Flynn and Campbell, 2005).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural orientation means learning in new blended mode can be difficult to grasp (Ku and Lohr, 2003; Dzakiria et al., 2006)• Language: worried about spelling and grammatical errors in online writing (Thompson and Ku, 2005)• Social and psychology barriers to technology (Cramphorn, 2004)



Solutions

- In small groups, discuss solutions to help students transition effectively to blended learning

(10 minutes discussion,
5 minutes feedback)



Conceptual transitions model

4. Autonomy	Essential for successful engagement in blended learning
3. Attributes (skills)	Developing the skills required to be able to be autonomous e.g. social and digital literacies, time management, critical thinking
2. Acculturation (attitudes to blended learning)	Assimilating or accommodating new ways of learning
1. Access	e.g. to devices, wi-fi, course content



Discussion: Recap and implementing solutions

- What key messages have emerged from these discussions?
- How do we go about implementing solutions?
- How can we work together (staff and students, and across institutions) to ease student transitions into blended learning?



For info...

- Collaborative project recently underway between four institutions to review induction materials for blended learning, funded by QAAS
- Enhancement & creation of resources
- For info contact Susi Peacock (speacock@qmu.ac.uk)

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