Academy Forum 2: Designing Blended Learning

## Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit

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| What is Blended Learning?As with many pedagogical concepts, providing a concrete definition can be a challenge. Advance HE’s definition is:Blended approaches use multiple methods to deliver learning combining face-to-face interactions with online activities.In short, the balance between the classroom elements and digitally enabled activity varies depending on the design and implementation of the learning. The flexibility inherent in this form of delivery enables teachers to rethink where and how they focus learning activity and students to develop self-directed learning skills and digital literacies.*Advance HE*Further information can be found on [**Advance HE’s Blended learning webpage.**](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/blended-learning-0)Design QuestionsHere are some questions that you may wish to consider when designing blended learning:* Which activities are taking place online and which face to face? What is your rationale behind the decision?
* What do students have to have done before engaging with an activity (whether that’s online or face to face)?
* How can you encourage engagement?
* How are you monitoring students’ outputs?
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| Schemas for Design |
| **ABC Learning Design**ABC Learning design offers the opportunity to re-design a module or scheme from scratch. It’s a high paced approach to design and can be run in 90 minutes. Activities are divided into the following categories:* Acquisition
* Collaboration
* Discussion
* Investigation
* Practice
* Production

Use the ABC learning design cards to decide on an online equivalent for a conventional activity.  | **Tip**Looking to re-vitalise your module? Use the ABC Design Tool as a diagnostic method to gain a module or scheme perspective. If any aspect is particularly dominant, remove some activities and replace with another. If you want further information about ABC Learning Design, email lteu@aber.ac.uk. Mary Jacob, Lecturer in Learning and Teaching and leader of the PGCTHE scheme, is trained in running ABC Learning Design Workshops and would be happy to discuss with your Department some strategies for designing a new scheme or module. Mary gives an overview to ABC Learning Design and other frameworks in this recorded introduction to [**Active Learning and Student Engagement**](https://aberystwyth.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=a962fe03-c1b6-41c4-9b1e-abe40112d525) (12mins, 45 secs).  |
| **RASE Framework**The RASE Framework is specifically designed to support Blended Learning. It’s a student centred – approach to design and includes learning activities. The following should be considered in the design of a module or a topic:* Resources
	+ Learning Objects, Multimedia Material, web content, articles, slides, notes, tools, real-time teaching, textbooks
* Activities
	+ Enquiry, problem solving, project work, collaborative task
* Support
	+ FAQs, Forums, Social networking, Email, Chat and other synchronous tools
* Evaluation
	+ Portfolios, Online Presentations, Reports
 | **Tip**Take a look at Course Design Model – [**RASE at the University of New South Wales, Sydney**](https://www.teaching.unsw.edu.au/course-design-model-rase)**.** There’s a short 5-minute [**video summary available**](https://youtu.be/U2B8i8ldqZo)**.** Negin Mirriahi, Dennis Alonzo, and Bob Fox outline a [**blended learning framework for curriculum design and professional development using the RASE method**](https://journal.alt.ac.uk/index.php/rlt/article/view/1707/xml_16)  in Research in Learning Technology. The excel spreadsheet that we shared with you in the workshop could be used to ascertain what is currently taking place on your module or to streamline existing material that has been created in response to the pandemic.  |

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| Online Tools AvailableThe below identifies the online tools that are available to you to use in your teaching.  |
| Discussion BoardsStaff and students have the ability to create threads, respond to threads, ask questions, respond to each other’s questions, rate posts. Lots of options in these to meet your learning need. Really useful for building up an online learning community and asynchronous tasks.Technical guidance on [**Discussion Boards.**](https://faqs.aber.ac.uk/index.php?search=Discussion) Got questions about how to go about designing Discussion Board activities? Take a look at our [**Tips for Discussion Board Engagement Blogpost.**](https://wordpress.aber.ac.uk/e-learning/2020/05/12/tips-for-discussion-board-engagement/) Looking for some inspiration? Martine Garland in the Business School uses discussion boards in her teaching. Check out her [**guest blogpost**](https://wordpress.aber.ac.uk/e-learning/2021/06/23/interactive-blackboard-tools-case-studies-discussion-boards/) and also her presentation [***Stimulating and Monitoring Continuous Engagement***](https://aberystwyth.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=9df1a619-ce71-474c-9446-ad5c007ff796)at our recent learning and teaching conference.  |
| Blogs and JournalsBlogs and Journals offer student spaces to reflect on ideas and chart their progress through a process.Thinking of creating a reading journal or a space for students to keep notes, then this is the tool for you. Journals are a private space between student and instructor, whereas blogs can be viewed by everybody on the course if you wish. Each of these tools also has the ability to allow for comments on posts. Students can create media rich responses.Technical guidance on [**Blogs**](https://faqs.aber.ac.uk/index.php?search=Blog) and [**Journals**](https://faqs.aber.ac.uk/index.php?search=Journals)**.** For a great overview of this tool, check out our blogpost [**Interactive Blackboard Tools Series – Journals and Blogs**](https://wordpress.aber.ac.uk/e-learning/2020/11/23/interactive-blackboard-tools-series-journals-and-blogs-part-1/)  |
| WikisWanting a collaborative task for your students to work on either synchronously or asynchronously? Want students to present information or conduct research for a specific audience? Then wikis are the tool for you. We’ve got a number of colleagues across the University making use of the wiki tool (both in assessed and unassessed activities). Technical guidance for [**Wikis**](https://faqs.aber.ac.uk/index.php?search=Wikis)**.** If you’re looking for a case study, then Mandy Talbot from the Business School has written [**a blogpost outlining her approach to wikis.**](https://wordpress.aber.ac.uk/e-learning/2021/07/28/interactive-blackboard-tools-case-studies-wikis/) |
| TestsBlackboard has an inbuilt Test function, which can be used for summative and formative activities. Certain question types have the capability to be automatically marked. You can give students multiple opportunities to take an assessment and choose when and how you release feedback. For an overview of Tests, check out our blogpost [**Blackboard Tests – Creating Online Assessment Activities for your Students**](https://wordpress.aber.ac.uk/e-learning/2020/04/28/blackboard-tests-creating-online-assessment-activities-for-your-students/)**.**Technical guidance on [**Tests**](https://faqs.aber.ac.uk/index.php?search=Tests)**.** |
| Vevox (polling software)We have recently procured Vevox, online polling software. Vevox is a really flexible polling tool that can be used in a wide variety of different learning activities, both face to face and online.To get an idea about how Vevox is being used at Aberystwyth, take a look at [**Vevox’s recent webinar.**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7YB0m_NwD4) Case studies include:* Module Evaluation
* Anonymous discussion
* Stats generation
* Peer-led assessment
* Asynchronous Q and A
* Measuring Impact

Technical [**guidance on Vevox.**](https://faqs.aber.ac.uk/index.php?search=Vevox) Take a look at our blogpost, [**Make Classroom Teaching Interactive with Technology.**](https://wordpress.aber.ac.uk/e-learning/2021/09/27/make-classroom-teaching-interactive-with-technology/) |
| Collaborative DocumentsTeams has the function to allow you and your students to collaborate on documents together. You can post a word or excel doc in the chat of your Teams meeting and all attendees will have permission to edit and amend it. Mary Jacob has made extensive use of this technique for participants on the PGCTHE. Technical [**guidance on Teams.**](https://faqs.aber.ac.uk/index.php?search=Teams4teach)  |

# Notes from Academy Forum

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| Activity 1: Your current approach* How have you approached and integrated online and face to face teaching in your modules? ​
* How do you identify which activities take place online or face to face? ​
* How much learning takes place online or face to face in your teaching? ​
* What’s your ideal ratio of online: face to face learning?

Strategies for successful activities include:* Advance availability of material
* Blended learning more successful with larger groups / cohorts of students
* Students watching lecture recordings together and offered a Teams meeting to discuss any questions from the content
* Shared / collaborative documents in Teams
* Encouraging in recorded content for students to reflect on a certain point or undertake an active cognitive task
* Student-led online practicals
* Being specific in tasks for preparation
* Maintaining a balance between necessary tasks and optional tasks
* Asking students to prepare for next seminar was too general
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| Activity 2: Rapid changes to pedagogies* How did you adapt your teaching in relation to the pandemic?
* Did you start producing more activities online?
* If so, what activities did you do?
* What practices will you continue to undertake in the future?

Adaptations include:* Capability to engage students in different ways
* Redesigning group work, including using online collaboration which would have been in class
* More involved in the designing process of learning and teaching
* The challenge of designing online practicals and the creative solutions applied
* Discussion around refining the abundance of material that was created
* Reviewing assessment
* Range of activities across different departments
* Easier for students to access and interact with
* Active, cognitive tasks were key to motivate students
* Being explicit and clear with students over what they need to do
* Introduce the way of learning as soon as possible for the students and present material consistently
* For IBERS DL, online synchronous sessions were offered for the first time
* Introduction of Teams enabled to engaged with more face to face activities
* Using Teams for Personal Tutees and supervisions has been really successful, and has challenged the power imbalance in physical spaces
* Increased practicality around editing files
* Breakout rooms were really useful
* Chat function in Teams worked well
* Review of provided learning resources needed, so that the increase in content during the pandemic doesn’t overwhelm students.
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| Activity 3: Integrating Activities* How do you reference online teaching in your face-to-face sessions?
* How do you integrate face to face teaching in online environment?

Integration challenges and strategies include:* Not all students watched or engaged with the resources before they came to class
* Re-iterating main takeaway from the session really helped
* A lack of engagement with recorded lectures meant that students needed to be encouraged and undertake the activities before coming to the face-to-face session
* Importance of signposting and using the opportunity of the online session to highlight what’s coming up
* Referring to the learning resources became more supportive
* Engagement was encouraged by linking to assessment
* Pointing out online activities and cross referencing the online materials was key
* Ensuring that Blackboard was tidy, clear, up to date, and accessible for students
* Use of Blackboard announcements to communicate and reference.
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