Student transitions to blended learning – challenges and solutions

Gearing Up 2017 Workshop
Josephine Adekola, Vicki Dale and Kate Powell
Contributing author: Kerr Gardiner
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
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Cohort</th>
<th>School A: (international postgraduates)</th>
<th>School B: (home undergraduate)</th>
<th>School C: (home/international postgraduates)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method of data collection used</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>End-of-course quality assurance survey*</td>
<td>Individual interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of participants (2014/15)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of participants (2015/16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
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*Survey modified to include questions pertinent to the study
### Blended learner experience research at UofG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic</th>
<th>Home UG students</th>
<th>International PG students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Time management</td>
<td>• Lack of input from others in the group e.g. to online seminars</td>
<td>• One semester too short to get used to online learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of F2F contact</td>
<td>• Variable access to reading materials</td>
<td>• Unless gone through GIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sense of isolation</td>
<td>• Assessment</td>
<td>• Harder to learn new concepts online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perceived lack of contact</td>
<td>• Lack of clarity</td>
<td>• Harder to ask questions online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feedback not immediate</td>
<td>• Disliked reflective journal</td>
<td>• Worrying about ‘losing face’ when asking questions online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technical issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Didn’t come to UK to study ‘online’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Video quality (sound,</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher assumed prior knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resolution)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- One semester too short to get used to online learning
- Unless gone through GIC
- Harder to learn new concepts online
- Harder to ask questions online
- 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)
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic</th>
<th>International students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Invasion of personal time and space (Smyth et al., 2012)</td>
<td>• Cultural orientation means learning in new blended mode can be difficult to grasp (Ku and Lohr, 2003; Dzakiria et al., 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difficulty adjusting to learning independently</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Time management, self-motivation (Marino, 2000, cited by Tsai et al 2000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Limited interactions and differences in learning preferences are likely to result in dropouts (Tinto, 1975)</td>
<td>• Language: worried about spelling and grammatical errors in online writing (Thompson and Ku, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technical problems (Concannon, Flynn and Campbell, 2005).</td>
<td>• Social and psychology barriers to technology (Cramphorn, 2004)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Solutions

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

(10 minutes discussion, 5 minutes feedback)
## Conceptual transitions model

<table>
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<tr>
<th>4. Autonomy</th>
<th>Essential for successful engagement in blended learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Attributes (skills)</td>
<td>Developing the skills required to be able to be autonomous e.g. social and digital literacies, time management, critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Acculturation (attitudes to blended learning)</td>
<td>Assimilating or accommodating new ways of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Access</td>
<td>e.g. to devices, wi-fi, course content</td>
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Adekola et al. (submitted for review)
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?
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)


Tsai, C.-W., Shen, P.-D. & Tsai, M.-C. (2011) Developing an appropriate design of blended learning with web-enabled self-regulated learning to enhance students' learning and thoughts regarding online learning. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 30(2), **261-271**.
Acknowledgements

- QAA Scotland for project funding
- Study participants from the University of Glasgow & the Enhancement Themes institutional team
Please contact us with any questions

josephine.adekola@glasgow.ac.uk
vicki.dale@glasgow.ac.uk
vp-education@src.gla.ac.uk (Kate)