

Discussion cards & shared language

Blended learning definitions

Blended learning: enriched, student-centred learning experiences made possible by the harmonious integration of different activating strategies, achieved through combining physical interaction with information and communication technology (or IT in short). Blended learning is an activity of the student, but to make that learning possible, first the lecturer has to take action. That is what blended teaching is for: designing and facilitating blended learning experiences.

When we take learning and teaching as a whole, the entirety of education emerges. This always happens in a broader context, and it is this context we refer to as blended education.

Blended education: the formal context of blended learning, defined by the organisation's policy and framework conditions and support for blended learning and teaching.

Case studies

Example A: At a university of applied sciences, first-year students take a Marketing Communication module. Before attending a session, they watch a number of knowledge clips, read a chapter from a book and take an online quiz on the knowledge provided. They also look for communication examples on platforms such as YouTube and share these with each other in the digital learning environment. During the session, students work on a case study where they apply the theory they studied in the homework. They upload the results in the digital learning environment. After the session, they receive online feedback from the lecturer on the outcome of the case study.

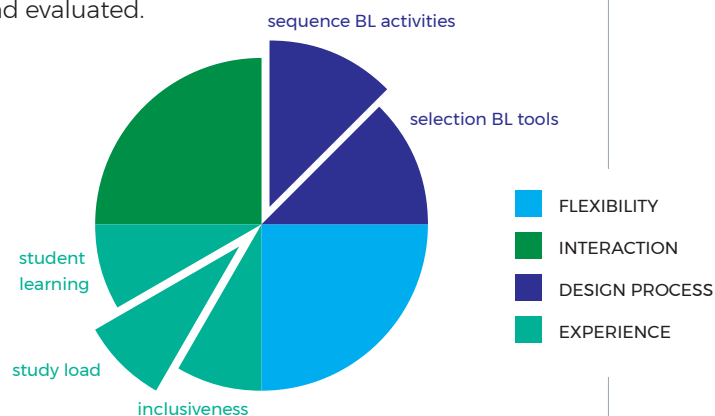
Example B: A university-wide vision of blended learning has been established and is being incorporated into the curriculum through the professional development of lecturers and in consultation with educational experts. In addition, an IT workgroup has been set up to support lecturers in the workplace. These colleagues are called DigiCoaches, and each course will have a dedicated DigiCoach. A project is also underway to make the schedule more flexible and more suitable for blended education.

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Levels of blended learning

Course level

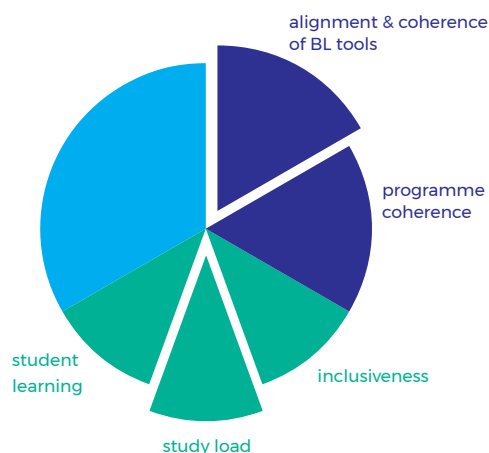
Blended learning at course level refers to the implementation and coherence of the learning activities students engage in when completing a course or module. A blended course consists of a well-considered balance between activating working forms and supporting online tools. In the design process, there is consideration for the flexibility of the course for the individual participant as well as in relation to the wider curriculum. A blended course puts the student experience at the heart of the process by designing it to be inclusive, making the learning process visible and aligning the study load with the target audience and the rest of the programme. All elements of the course design are continuously monitored and evaluated.



Programme level

Blended learning at programme or curriculum level refers to the coherence between courses and learning paths within a full study programme. A blended programme (or curriculum) consists of three pillars:

- the design process, in which a balanced and harmonised programme is created;
- the extent to which the programme is flexible and adaptive;
- the student experience, as enhanced by focusing on student learning, study load and inclusiveness.

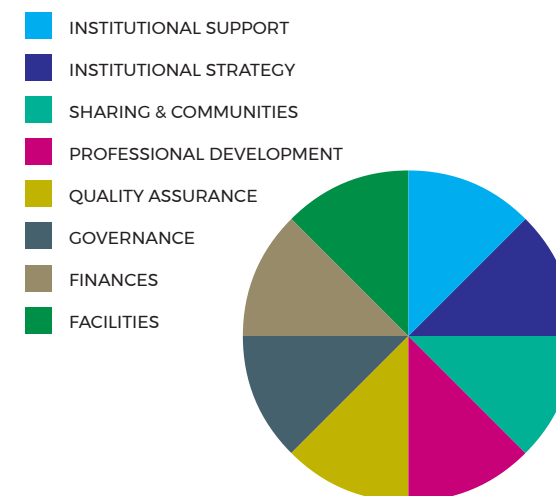


Institutional level

Blended learning at institutional level is about the implementation aspect, or the formal context within which blended learning takes place.

At institution level, blended education develops through a shared vision, professional development of lecturers, and support facilities.

A blended institution shares its experiences through tangible examples of where things are going well but also not so well, and has a broad focus on quality and development.



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Learning environments

Digital learning environment

The digital learning environment is the set of systems or applications that support teaching and learning. Students and lecturers use the digital learning environment for many different activities, such as communication, organising learning processes and sharing educational content.

Physical learning environment

The physical learning environment is an on-campus space, such as a classroom or study landscape, that motivates and encourages users of the space to learn and supports them in undertaking learning and other activities.

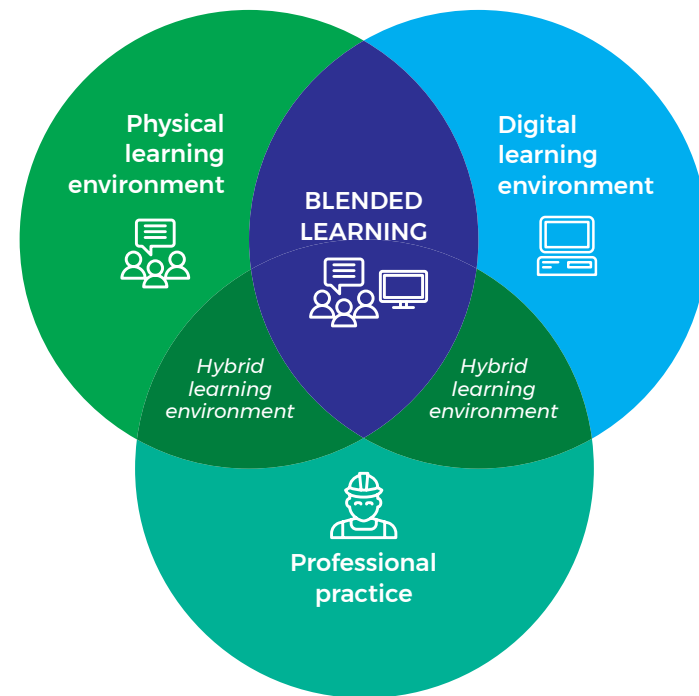
Professional practice as a learning environment

Professional practice as a learning environment refers to the location where workplace learning takes place, such as internships, trainee and part-time programmes, work visits and job shadowing days.

Hybrid learning environment

In a hybrid learning environment, learning in the course is combined with learning in professional practice.

Explanation and questions



Questions:

- What learning environments do you use in your teaching?
- Which learning environment would you like to use more, and why are you not doing it now?
- How do you connect the different learning environments?

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Synchronous and asynchronous learning

Synchronous learning

In synchronous learning, learners are all present at the same time, often – but not necessarily – with a lecturer. Synchronous learning can be F2F as well as online. The main characteristic is that there is space and time for direct interaction with the lecturer and among students.

Asynchronous learning

In asynchronous learning, the learning activities are designed such that participants do not simultaneously undertake them. An e-learning module is a good example of this type of learning, as the student decides when to take the module. Reading a book is also an asynchronous learning activity. Asynchronous learning often takes place remotely, but can also take place on location, under supervision.

Synchronous learning	Asynchronous learning
In a group	Autonomously
Focus on interaction	Focus on deepening understanding
Dependent on time and place	Independent of time and place
Interaction between learners	Participants learn in their own time and pace
Direct feedback from lecturer & peers	Interactive online feedback
According to a fixed schedule	Flexible

Example

Synchronous and asynchronous learning activities are combined in a course to create a flexible and activating programme. Much of the knowledge transfer and instruction has been converted into knowledge clips that can be viewed online (asynchronous). In class, the lecturer addresses questions about the material (synchronous) and then gets students working in groups on a case study (synchronous).

Part of the case will be discussed in class (synchronous). Groups complete the questions from the case study outside the lesson (asynchronous), submit this online and give online feedback on another group's elaboration (asynchronous). After a few days, the lecturer provides feedback on the students' online feedback in a group discussion via Teams (synchronous).

This example illustrates how synchronous and asynchronous learning can be mutually reinforcing. In other words, it is not about choosing one or the other, but about seeking the optimal combination.