

Blended Learning Policy

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1. Scope

1.1 This document sets out the university's policy for blended learning. The policy will be regularly reviewed by the University's Learning and Teaching Committee.

1.2 UEA is a campus-based University with a blended pedagogical approach – the balance of activity and interpretation of this may vary in terms of intensity and methodology, i.e. the pattern of in-person vs. digital learning activity will be different dependent on the outcomes and pedagogical effectiveness of differing teaching practices in differing disciplines. This policy should not impact on the development of fully online course provision.

1.3 The policy is intended to ensure that blended learning as offered by UEA courses is inspiring, motivating, inclusive and enhances engagement.

1.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following university policies;

- [Lecture Capture for Education Purposes](#);
- [Inclusive Education Policy](#);
- [Intellectual Property \(IP\) Regulations](#); and
- [Peer Observation Policy](#)

2. Introduction

2.1 The policy will have the following goals to impact the student experience in their learning in a positive way, by providing blended learning which is:

- **Engaging**, because teaching design plans for different tasks that involve the students at different times during the day and during the week.
- **Empowering**, because it allows students to explore different modes of learning, and to identify which mode suits best individual needs.
- **Effective**, because passive learning modes are augmented, if not replaced, by active learning tasks, which are proven by research to improve student learning in an inclusive way.
- **Enhanced**, because students have increased interactions between themselves and teaching staff.
- **Efficient**, because it reduces the needs for timetabling and room-booking, designing learning activities that can take place within as well as outside the classroom, synchronously or asynchronously. It can also reduce costs for students with regards to travel and other related expenses.

2.2 The policy will impact staff experiences by:

- **Empowering** staff to innovate;
- **Enabling** staff to deliver blended learning through training opportunities and the development of communities of practice; and
- **Engaging** as it generates opportunities for more interaction between staff and students.

3. Definitions

3.1 The Office for Students (OfS) define blended learning as “*teaching and learning that combines thoughtful integration of in-person delivery and delivery in a digital environment*”

3.2 UEA has developed a more detailed definition which is the one used for the purposes of this policy.

The UEA blended learning approach combines a selection of pedagogical activities to maximise students’ engagement and understanding, as well as their agency, mastery, and ultimately ownership of a subject. Blended learning environments blur the boundaries between physical and virtual spaces and exploit the unique potential of each of these spaces. Blended learning also combines the timing of pedagogical design, reflecting on what students do on their own and what they do with their peers, either synchronously or asynchronously.

- **Pedagogical activities** are blended, when we combine a range of different learning opportunities, integrating reading, watching videos, practicing material, debating, discussing, writing reports, essays, and blogs, tweeting, reflecting, evaluating, and analysing.
- **Learning environments** are blended, when we facilitate teaching in highly interactive virtual spaces and combine them with the personal and physical experience of a classroom.
- **Teaching time** is blended, when we design asynchronous activities that students can process in their own time, such as watching instructional videos, reading independently, or participating in discussion board discussions, with synchronous activities such as debating, discussing, solving problems, and working collaboratively with peers.

4. Hybrid/Hyflex Learning

4.1 Hybrid or Hylex learning is where students attend a live streamed session online with students who are face-to-face.

4.2 UEA **does not** recommend a hybrid/hyflex mode of delivery as it is difficult to provide the students online with the same experience as those in the room. However, there are some cases where hybrid learning can be delivered, but this should be by exception and in agreement with the Head of School (HoS) and the Director of Teaching and Learning (DoTL).

4.3 There may also be rare cases where a student has requested a remote delivery experience due to exceptional circumstances. This would have to be recommended by Student Support and then approved by the HoS and DoTL.

5. Institutional

5.1 Marketing and Applicants

Applicants should know about the blended learning strategy used as part of the design for UEA courses. This will form part of the marketing text for each course available in the course catalogue. This is a generic statement on the use of blended learning and how it enhances the student experience. This will also be highlighted at open and applicant days. Example text will be supplied by ARM in collaboration with the CHERPPS director and the APVC-LTE which can be tailored for use.

5.2 Welcome Week

5.2.1 The blended learning strategy and how it is used to enhance learning within a course should be made clear to students during course induction talks at Welcome Week. Example information which can be tailored for use by course directors/leads is provided in the Guidance document.

5.2.2 Blended Learning statements on what technologies are being used for learning as part of a course and how to access further training should be written by Course Directors/Leads. Example statements are provided in the Guidance document.

5.2.3 Training on learning technologies will be provided at Welcome Week as part of the Institution provision. This will be delivered by CTCL. The training will also be provided as self-access for late arriving students and PGT students who are not officially in scope for welcome week.

5.3 Quality Assurance

5.3.1 Quality assurance (QA) is critical to compliance with regulations which allows us to be a registered higher education provider with the OfS. Ensuring that students have a clear understanding of what blended learning is and how it enhances their learning is part of our compliance with OfS regulations B1 and B2.

5.3.2 These QA processes include course and module evaluations, and the blended learning design forms part of the student experience which is evaluated.

5.3.3 The Blended Learning approach taken by a School should be part of the School Teaching Excellence Plans (TEPs).

6.0 Pedagogy

6.1 The blended learning approach is discipline specific and the decisions around blended learning approaches should be taken at course level with the course director having input into the use of blended learning at module level to ensure consistency

across a programme This discussion should involve the course director/leads, module organisers and the DoTL. Blended Learning approaches should be articulated in TEPs. A minimum level of expectation at module level is provided in table 1.

Table 1 Blended Learning Minimum Expectation Checklist for Modules

This is a set of minimum expectations at module level. The Course Director, or other appointed Teaching Lead or professional service colleague should have oversight of the blended learning in all modules in their course to ensure consistency of the student learning experience on their course.

Module component	Created Object(s) or Approaches	Y/N
Module overview	A short welcome message to the module, which could be a video to introduce the module organiser and the teaching team, or it could be text.	
	Provide details on module learning outcomes	
	Guide on how to use online resources, and how this will support learning and enable students to achieve their learning outcomes.	
	Design the layout of content on Blackboard according to the template used by the School/Faculty. This will provide students with a consistent experience across their Bb module sites.	
	A reading list should be provided using Tallis	
Module content	Provide meaningful descriptions for all resources. Images should be provided with alternative text. This can be managed with the use of Ally in Blackboard.	
	Provide information on the time it will take to complete specific tasks. Note where content is compulsory or where it is provided for extra study.	
	Use a range of content formats, e.g. reading, video, audio to generate learning resources	
	Lectures should be recorded using the university lecture capture system, ECHO360. Lectures will be scheduled for recording unless a specific staff member has opted out. ¹	
	Events designed to include significant student participation and/or interaction should be recorded only if students have given consent through the student registration task.	
Communication	Make sure that the contact details for all staff teaching on the module are available. Set expectations on when and how staff will communicate and respond. Meetings with students can be managed through 'Bookings with Me'.	

¹ At the time of presenting this Blended Learning policy to LTC the position to opt-out on lecture capture has not yet been approved. If the decision to move to opt-out is rejected, then this policy will be amended and approved by Chair's action.

	Use the range of communication tools available, such as discussion boards, chats and virtual classrooms to maintain contact with students and to help develop interaction between students and build a community. Aim for a consistent use of the communication tools across the modules in a course.	
Assessment	Provide assessment briefs for all formative and summative assessments.	
	Provide information on the marking criteria	
	Do not provide assessment deadlines in recorded material which can become out of date if the learning resource is re-used. Ideally assessment deadlines should remain as a single point of truth on SITS and accessed by students through e-vision. If assessment deadlines are also elsewhere, then the MO must ensure they are consistent with information on SITS.	
	Provide information on when feedback on coursework is available	
Evaluation	Conduct and then provide feedback on mid-module evaluation	
	Provide instructions, and conduct in class (if possible) end of module evaluation and provide feedback to students	

6.2 If individuals or Schools want to discuss the evidence-base for blended learning and develop new practices it is recommended that contact is made with The Centre for Higher Educations, Research, Practice, Policy and Scholarship (CHERPSS). CHERPPS will also offer training for academic and professional service staff on Blended Learning strategies.

6.3 CHERPPS will continue to instigate and encourage evidence based pedagogical research in blended learning.

6.4 There are some modules which are designed to be fully online and all students receive a consistent experience. Some modules may also use online synchronous delivery as a component delivered to all enrolled students. The policy allows for these pedagogical approaches to continue.

7.0 Technology

7.1 Technologies which are used to support blended learning are diverse and can change. The technologies which are currently supported by UEA are provided [here](#).

7.2 Technologies are not only used to deliver online learning (whether asynchronous or synchronous) but also used in face-to-face sessions on campus.

7.3 The current delivery platform for our online content is Blackboard, which is a virtual learning environment (VLE). Blackboard provides opportunities for;

- Communication-between students and staff and students with students;

- Content development and delivery;
- Formative and summative assessment information and submission; and
- Management and administration.

7.4 As far as possible third-party tools for learning and assessment are integrated into Blackboard.

7.5 The University through the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL) will continue to review existing blended learning tools, keep abreast of new technology and propose investment where appropriate.

7.6 Staff should only use tools which are provided and supported by the university. Staff wishing to explore other options should contact CTEL about their requirements.

8.0 Support, Training and Professional Development for Staff

8.1 The University will ensure staff are trained and supported to deliver blended learning.

8.2 Each School should have access to a digital champion (DC) who can help support staff in collaboration with CTEL. An individual school can appoint a DC, or a faculty can appoint to support their Schools. The job description of the digital champion is provided in the guidance document. The DC community is supported by CTEL, and there are opportunities for them in terms of professional development in CHERPPS.

8.3 UEA has a number of self-access training courses which are available. These are updated on an annual basis. Details of these are in the guidance document.

8.4 Schools can request bespoke training from CTEL on specific technologies, such as ECHO360 for lecture capture.

8.5 CTEL run Communities of Practice around specific pieces of software which staff can join. Details of these are provided in the guidance document.

8.6 Staff are advised to contact CHERPPS when considering new blended learning programmes, or if staff wish to design an evaluation of a teaching tool.

8.7 When considering adopting a new piece of software contact CTEL.

9.0 Support and Training for Students

9.1 The University will ensure that students are aware of what the definition of blended learning is, and how it is used in their course to enhance the learning experience.

9.2 The University will ensure that students have access to the required software tools and that self-access training and support is available.

9.3 Module organisers need to make students aware if very specific pieces of software are required to achieve learning outcomes.

9.4 Support for students on getting the best use out of learning technology software will be provided through CTET.

9.5 The self-access course 'Preparing to Learn' will be refreshed on an annual basis in collaboration with the Student Union.

10.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

10.1 A paper on blended learning and the use of our learning technology tools comes to LTC, Senate and Council on an annual basis.

10.2 Granular data obtained from our software usage which is compiled through CTET is available at a School level and is shared with the HoS and DoTL.

10.3 Blended Learning Strategies will be articulated in School TEPs.

Appendix 1 Mapping of the OfS Blended Learning Review Recommendations against the UEA Current Position

Recommendation	Current UEA Position	Next Steps	B1/B2 Compliance
Providers should ensure their approaches to blended learning offer a coherent learning experience to students, including ensuring coherence at a course level if decisions about the blend are decided at a module level	We do not have a blended learning policy, but we do have guidelines, including a self reflection tool of benchmarking statements. The use of blended learning is discipline specific and to enforce a top down approach would probably not be desirable and lead to discussion around 'exceptions'.	Discuss with stakeholders within a task and finish group the difference and requirements for a blended learning strategy document as opposed to a policy document. Implement the decision of the task and finish group	B1
Providers should ensure that growth in student numbers does not drive the approach to blended learning and that, instead, the blended approach should be informed by sound pedagogic principles.	Growth of student numbers on most courses is not a current risk, what is a risk is the loss of room stock due to the campus development programme. We currently work with the timetable team to ensure that all face-to-face can be scheduled	Continue to work with schools on the impact of delivery with large cohorts and impact of CDP.	B2
Providers should ensure applicants have clear web-based information about the approach to blended learning adopted on courses they are applying for. This information does not need to be expressed as a ratio but should give prospective students a clear picture of the modalities of learning they will encounter on any given course.	This is not something which we do already.	Work with stakeholders and potentially bring this in under a blended learning strategy/policy. Work with relevant stakeholders for implementation. We can at institutional level provide a form of words which can	B1/B2

		be tailored for use by courses.	
Providers should ensure that, once enrolled, students continue to be supplied with accurate information about the blended approaches adopted on their course and modules across each year of study.	There are pockets of good practice at the university where this does occur.	Learn from current good practice and seek to implement under a strategy/policy document	B1/B2
Providers should ensure that, if a ratio-based approach is adopted as a way to describe the balance of a blended offer, the ratio definition is clear, to help students know what to expect.	We do use ratio data from timetabler to help us understand the amount of online delivery. This information is asked of us by students and committees, e.g. SU, LTC, Senate and Council. However along with this is contextual information about our definition of a blended learning offer and pedagogical design	Carry on with current process, but can include more on the rationale and evidence for the approaches taken	B1
Providers should ensure that sound pedagogic reasons underpin the blend approach adopted, and that these principles are communicated to students so that they understand the rationale for approaches adopted.	There are excellent examples of pedagogy-led blended learning across the institution. We have a 'Successful Learning' course which students can enrol on which explains the rationale.	Consider other ways in which we can communicate to students our blended learning approach. Involved the Centre for Higher Education, Research, Practice, Policy and Scholarship (CHERPPS) in highlighting and disseminating good practice	B1

Providers should ensure that appropriate provision is made on-campus to support blended learning, informed by consideration of how students engage with online elements of their course while they are on campus.	We are currently investing in new blended learning tools for engagement and assessment. This is part of a digital change programme and was evidenced through a comprehensive gap analysis project. Private study spaces are available for students to engage with online elements. IT support is available.	Continue to work on bringing in new software tools and highlighting these to staff and students.	B2
Providers should ensure that unedited lectures from previous years are carefully reviewed before they are used again, to identify and edit out incorrect course information and to make sure course content is up to date.	This is not currently part of the policy, although we have a two year retention period under the existing policy which mitigates this to some extent. However staff can choose to keep content for longer.	Consider making reference to this in the next policy update	B1/B2
Providers should ensure they have clear policies about the ownership, storage and reuse of lectures and this information should be clearly communicated to students and staff.	We have a lecture capture policy which is reviewed annually by LTC. This is available, along with FAQs on the university web pages. This covers ownership, storage, and reuse.	The policy and the FAQs could be made more visible, this will be dealt with through the new staff information zone.	B1/B2
Providers should ensure that all staff are supported to develop their pedagogic expertise across face-to-face and online modalities, with a focus on supporting the delivery of blended learning. This should align with the refreshed UK Professional	We currently have a 'Design and Delivery of Blended Learning' self access course. Blended learning support is also provided through our Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL),	Our staff development in this area will be looked at again and then aligned with the new UKPSF when available.	B2

Standards Framework (UKPSF) (currently under consultation).	and through CHERPPS. New staff on the MAHEP programme are supported in learning about the concepts and theories of online learning.		
Providers should ensure that, as the core skills and knowledge required to deliver high quality blended courses continue to extend, teaching staff's continuous professional development in line with this extension is fully supported.	We currently have a 'Design and Delivery of Blended Learning' self access course. Blended learning support is also provided through our Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL), and through CHERPPS. New staff on the MAHEP programme are supported in learning about the concepts and theories of online learning. We also have a network of digital champions who help support colleagues, in this area and this also an example of activity within the Peer Observation Policy.	Our staff development in this area will be looked at again with regards to CHERPPS and CTCL activity	B2
Providers should ensure that, where course content is delivered asynchronously, approaches to teaching and learning are designed to facilitate learning checks that support students and help the course team to identify where students are struggling with online content or falling behind, so that their learning needs can be addressed.	We have software which can facilitate self-checks for understanding and these are widely used across the institution.	CHERPPS and CTCL to have a role in the dissemination of good practice	B1/B2

Providers should ensure that their learning design across modalities supports interactive and collaborative activities that help students access feedback from the course team and from their peers. This is recommended as an area for pedagogic staff development.	There are areas of strong practice across the institution. We are investing in digital tools to facilitate this activity. It is recognised that more can be done in this space.	This area should form part of the offer from CHERPPS, and we will take discussion forward as to how we can disseminate good practice. Continue with the work to invest in and implement new tools to facilitate.	B1
Providers should ensure that they actively engage with students to identify barriers to engagement and attendance. This will enable staff to design in pedagogic and formative assessment approaches that support attendance and engagement that in turn are associated with positive outcomes for students.	We are working on a Phase 1 project using analytics to support our understanding of student engagement. Students at risk will be flagged and supported.	The project will be evaluated and the information used to inform Phase 2. Information will be used more widely to consider assessment practices.	B1/B2
Providers should ensure that students' engagement with their studies is supported	Over the last few years we have embedded well-being teams within the faculties, this has expanded the capacity to support student's wellbeing. The student support service also works at capacity to support academic work. It is recognised that this service is stretched. There are self-access resources but these are scattered around different digital locations.	Consider investing in a Digital Campus App which will surface to students the support available in a single location.	B1

Providers should ensure that they have means to assure themselves that the blend approaches adopted on any given course are coherent and provide an appropriate balance of directed and independent study.	We have opportunities for students to feed back to us in mid-module evaluations and end of module evaluations. There are also course level evaluations. However the processes for these are not optimal.	Continue the work to surface the best ways in which student module evaluation can be captured, and how the experiences of blended learning approaches can form part of this process.	B1
Providers should ensure that students are given clear pre-arrival information about the knowledge and skills they will need to engage successfully in their study.	We do not currently do this	Bring together a task and finish group to discuss ways in which this can be communicated to new students as part of CRM messaging, and offer sessions within welcome week. This will also need to be discussed in the context of a strategy/policy document	B1
Providers should ensure they offer appropriate digital learning support to all students and should evaluate this offer to ensure it is fit for purpose.	Digital learning support is offered in a number of ways-it can be discipline specific, e.g. GIS software which is delivered within modules, or it can be more generalised, such as training offered through LinkedIn Learning on Microsoft products such as Office 365. We have a 'Successful Learning' course which students can enrol on which links out to other training and	Consider ways in which we can evaluate the use of e.g. LinkedIn learning and the self access course on Successful Learning.	B1

	advises on e.g. hardware specification. Module specific training can be captured in module evaluation, more general training needs to be captured in a different way and this is currently lacking.		
Providers should ensure they communicate clearly to students about how they can access digital skills development.	We have a 'Successful Learning' course which students can enrol on which links out to other training and advises on e.g. hardware specification. Other training can be accessed through LinkedIn Learning.	The communication around this could be much better, and we need to discuss how this could be implemented	B1
Providers should ensure they work in partnership with students to develop community building opportunities within all aspects of courses (within and extra curricula, online and on campus). This is recommended to address the continuing negative impacts of lockdown study.	We work closely with our students and there is representation across all relevant committees. Students have a voice in both faculty and school teaching executives. The student voice is actively encouraged in university developments which relate to learning and teaching (as well as research for PGR students). We have a student partnership agreement.	Ensure that the student voice is represented throughout the university. Use information from the Pulse Survey to affect change where necessary.	B1
Providers should ensure that they work with students and student unions to create bespoke tools (surveys, focus groups, reference groups, etc.) that offer students	We have opportunities for students to feed back to us in mid-module evaluations and end of module evaluations.	Work is ongoing to improve the work flow process and the data. We are instigating new	B1

opportunities to evaluate their experience of blended on-campus and online study.	There are also course level evaluations. However the processes for these are not optimal, and we do not close the feedback loop well with regards to action.	workflows around end of module evaluation which is being managed at a Faculty level. We are trialling with SSF a more central approach management with supported from CTCL.	
Providers should ensure that students' evaluations of blended learning are used to inform course design enhancement.	We have opportunities for students to feed back to us in mid-module evaluations and end of module and course evaluations. It is not always clear or documented how student's evaluations are used to inform course design enhancement.	In considering ed of module and course evaluation which need to document more clearly how student's evaluations are used for course design enhancements. This will be considered under the curriculum management project.	B1