

Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for advancing teaching and learning at Mona

Centre for Excellence in Teaching
and Learning, UWI Mona



January/ February 2013

Volume 5 Number 4

Special points of interest:

- The Teaching Tips Newsletter is a publication of the Instructional Development Unit (IDU) at the UWI, Mona.
- The Newsletter is published once per month and provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education. It is available online (<http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/idu/>) as well as in the office of the IDU.
- If you have an area that you would like to explore using this medium, do not hesitate to contact us at the IDU.

Blended Learning



Online learning is making head waves all over the place. In fact many claims are being made about the possibilities of online learning. The application of new technology to education is something that we must seek to do in order to reach contemporary learners in universities and colleges. Many faculty members are very comfortable with face-to-face-teaching and learning and might not want to change. However, some educators are fully aware that educational technology, when it is applied with thoroughgoing thoughtfulness and with resources that advance learning, can be extremely useful. Hence they are proposing a change to blended learning .

What is Blended Learning?

Blended Learning is an approach to facilitating learning that combines face-to-face (F2F) classroom learning and teaching activities with computer-mediated learning and teaching strategies. The result of this arrangement is an integrated approach to learning and teaching. In some cases, F2F meetings are reduced since there is an online component to the course being offered. Oftentimes, the terms “blended learning,” “hybrid” and “mixed mode” are used interchangeably.

Why Blend?

The major goal of blended learning is to promote the most effective and efficient learning and teaching arrangement by combining the delivery approaches. Hence, in the classroom, students can be supported to learn content by engaging in interactive activities. Computer-mediated learning and teaching allows for the online component or computer-mediated segment of a course to

provide multimedia opportunities for learning. It is possible to include interactive technologies such as blogs, wikis, social media, video/audio conferencing, discussion forums, Second Life, lecture capturing, iPads or mobile technologies in the blended learning arrangements. In fact, many of these technologies have been integrated into the blended learning environments in universities and colleges and the results have suggested that there have been increased students’ engagement and learning. The power of this arrangement is seen in the following equation: F2F + Synchronous Conversations + Asynchronous Interactions = Strong Online Learning Environment.

Blended Learning Models and Usage

There are various models of blended learning. You will want to use one that meets your needs and of course, the needs of your students. Here are some examples/models:

Face-Face Driver

In the F2F approach, the classroom teacher leads and facilitates learning in a traditional classroom setting. In this regard, F2F teaching drives the course. Additionally, the teacher uses online teaching and learning activities to supplement the learning opportunities.

Using this Model in Your Classroom

This is an approach you might want to consider and implement by obtaining some software programme for aspects of your course to supplement learning. Most of the teaching and learning sessions will continue to be F2F with supplemental teaching opportunities provided by computer-mediated activities and these could be online or otherwise.

Rotation

This is a model that you can choose allowing your students to rotate on a fixed schedule between self-paced online teaching learning arrangements and the regular classroom space. Of course you must ensure that your guidance (F2F teaching) is made available.

Using this Model in Your Classroom

The rotation model must be properly implemented so as you decide and plan to use both F2F teaching and learning and online learning, ensure adequate planning is done. You will arrange for your students to have some classes, perhaps portions of a course online and some to take a parts of the course making use of the traditional classroom teaching approaches. There is a place for a learning lab and you might want to include one in your course. Create opportunities for the students to use a variety of online programmes. Please ensure that these are carefully selected. The learning lab would provide an opportunity for students to use computers to focus on aspects of the course, individual learning needs and skill development.

Flex

In this model, an online platform is used by the facilitator to provide most of the teaching and learning opportunities. As the teacher, you will have to make yourself available to provide on-site support. Consider using individual tutoring arrangements or small group learning sessions.

Using this Model in Your Classroom

Following previous usages of this model in K-12 education and in colleges and universities focusing on dropout prevention and recovery, this flex model might be useful in the higher education landscape too. The first thing to ensure is that your students are tested upon enrollment in your course. This diagnostic assessment will help you to develop with the student an individualized learning plan. Ensure the students are fully conversant with the requirements of the programme. Use the online platform to provide the teaching and learning activities. Empower the Student to monitor his or her learning by continuous checking of the individualized learning plan and create opportunities for this to be done using the computer-aided approaches/learning management systems.

Online Lab

In this teaching and learning arrangement, you will use an online platform to deliver the entire course in a traditional classroom setting. Students will usually take other courses in traditional classroom settings.

Using this Model in Your Classroom

This is a teaching and learning arrangement that allows students to complete required coursework in virtual learning lab setting. There is limited faculty interaction in these sessions. Students come to the campus of the university, where computer access is made available to complete coursework online with some supervision. The supervision could be from graduate students or peer tutors. It is the F2F interaction that is reduced in this model.

Self Blend

This approach enables students to take courses online to supplement the traditional curriculum offered by the institution. In this regard, you must create opportunities for students to work remotely and face-to-face.

Using this Model in Your Classroom

As a teacher interested in the success of your students, you will want to create an approach that enables a student to increase his or her course load and avoid problematic course scheduling. Some courses will be available in the traditional mode and others will be made available online. In this model, at least one course in all programmes in the institution's curriculum offered by the student will be placed online and then the student will take it remotely. The student is able to blend the programme that is being pursued.

Online Driver

This is a teaching learning arrangement that uses an online platform and a classroom teacher to deliver the curriculum and facilitate learning. Students work remotely as well as F2F.

Using this Model in Your Classroom

This model is best applied by putting your courses online and providing on-site or on-campus support. Students will meet you F2F for the first class but the other classes and coursework are online. However, F2F facilitation sessions are available usually by appointment or special arrangements.



Check out our publications at

myspot.mona.uwi.edu/idu/publications

which features our monthly *Teaching Tips*,
Newsletters and Assessment Handbook.

Our website: myspot.mona.uwi.edu/idu **Twitter:** iduwwimona

Blog: <http://idumona.blogspot.com/>