Introduction

There has been considerable positive activity in the University in general, and MaPS in particular, to adopt Blended Learning approaches into the curriculum. However, recent institutional and external advances are transforming the tools available for blended learning. These include MOOCs, lecture capture and multimedia management capabilities, social media, Open Educational Resources and mobile devices.

In view of these developments the University has endorsed an updated Blended Learning Strategy (FTSEC/13-04). It is hoped that the new Strategy will be widely used and referenced. The University has also requested that each Faculty produce its own strategy document, contextualising the Blended Learning Strategy locally. This is the purpose of the current document.

The MaPS Faculty Blended Learning Champion and Faculty Blended Learning Committee will share responsibility for monitoring progress against the strategy and associated action plan across the faculty.

Definition

01. Blended Learning is the considered, complementary use of face-to-face teaching, technology, online tools and resources to enhance student education.

Vision

02. Each programme will define and embed into a research-led curriculum an appropriate blended learning approach which supports learning, enhances the student experience, and inspires students to reach their full potential so that they can have an impact on our global and digital society.

Context

03. The Learning and Teaching Board had a vision that by 2012, “a blended learning student experience would be a normal expectation” (LTB/06-43). Now, all staff and students are using technology in learning to some extent. This Strategy aims to develop this in a planned, structured and consistent way, in order to ensure the blend of tools we use is appropriate to the educational context. A key strategic aim of the University continues to be to translate excellence in research and scholarship into learning opportunities for students. Therefore, the effective integration of digital
and non-digital tools should provide exceptional and inspirational teaching in a research-led context.

04. Learning technology is an evolving discipline in a fast-changing world that requires an on-going and focused endeavour from practitioners and institutions in order to make conscious decisions on how to enhance student learning and the quality of the student experience. Blended learning applies to all stages of learning and teaching, including curriculum design, delivery and assessment and also applies to many different modes of learning: lecture-based, seminars, laboratory, practice-led, clinical, and so on. It is expected that the actual blend of technology and face-to-face tools will vary depending on the context.

05. The University values the role of individual innovators, and pilot projects are useful in exploring new technologies. However, the Strategy applies to all programmes and staff. The Strategy applies to taught programmes, but the document may include information relevant to research student supervision. This strategy should be read in conjunction with the Digital Strategy for Taught Student Education¹, which is an overarching strategy concerned with all aspects of student education and the student experience.

Benefits

06. The benefits of blended learning include:

- Students are learning using digital tools in their everyday lives. Embedding blended learning approaches into all aspects of education will help students to make sense of their learning experiences, including digital experiences.

- Use of a blend of digital and non-digital tools is common within the workplace, and employers expect graduates to be competent with digital tools.

- Mobile device ownership is increasing rapidly. Blended learning approaches can effectively exploit these technologies to encourage anytime, anywhere learning.

- Evidencing an integrated use of blended learning approaches will meet the expectations of potential applicants, current students, staff and external stakeholders.

- Publication of digital learning materials externally (in the form of learning assets and structured online courses) will increase the University’s global standing and inspire high quality applicants.

- Use of a wide range of internally produced and externally sourced (open educational) learning resources enriches students learning opportunities.

- Innovation, creativity and piloting of new approaches to blended learning will help the University to maintain and extend its distinctive edge and offer professional development opportunities for staff.

Principles

07. The following principles should be adopted for all use of blended learning approaches:

- **Programme-focused**: all blended learning approaches which support learning and enhance the student experience at the University of Leeds should be considered by programme teams to ensure appropriate consistency in the student experience.

- **Educationally appropriate**: technology intervention should be curriculum focussed and aligned to the learning strategy. Approaches should be consistent with current educational literature and described in appropriate documentation such as specifications and reviews.

- **Research-based**: use of technologies and digital material should support students' understanding and experience of the research underpinning their discipline and their learning.

- **Optimising contact time**: use of technology and digital materials within, and outside the classroom should enhance learning during contact time.

- **High quality content**: all digital learning materials, whether produced internally or sourced from external open educational resources (OERs), should be relevant and fit for purpose (see University position on OERs\(^2\)).

- **Available and Accessible**: all tools and digital materials should be designed with mobile technologies in mind, normally made available ahead of time and be accessible to all students\(^3\).

- **Use of learning spaces**: Innovative and effective use should be made of existing physical spaces to enhance learning.

- **Skills development**: graduate-level digital literacy skills should be developed to enhance employability.

Infrastructure and resources

08. The following infrastructure and resources are available (or will be for 2014/15) within the University and should be used as part of an integrated blended learning approach:

- **Event capture system** in central teaching spaces and at-desk, for the recording and publication of audio, screen capture and (in some spaces) video from teaching, learning and assessment sessions;

- **Multimedia management system** for storage, management and publication of all audio and video assets for use in teaching, learning and assessment;

\(^2\) [http://www.leeds.ac.uk/qat/documents/policy/OERs.pdf](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/qat/documents/policy/OERs.pdf)

\(^3\) [http://www.leeds.ac.uk/accessibility](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/accessibility)
- **Video-conferencing and interactive classroom facilities** for synchronous interaction and collaboration between teachers and students;

- **External digital learning channels** for publication of learning assets and structured courses to global audiences (e.g. iTunesU, YouTube, FutureLearn platforms);

- **Digital content repositories** for depositing and accessing teaching materials for use with students (e.g. Jorum, Digital Library);

- **Virtual learning environment** for managed publication of learning resources, provision of information, interaction, collaborative and reflective writing, assessment and curation of external resources.

- **Computing facilities and software packages** for group based teaching, learning and assessment and specialist use of software.

- **Skills resources** through library websites (e.g. Skills), training opportunities and local provision.

- **Tools for pilots** provided through Staff Development or IT services.

09. Additional specialist facilities and resources may be provided within MaPS to support blended learning approaches as appropriate to the discipline. These should be integrated into the curriculum in accordance with this strategy.

**Measures of success**

10. Programme teams will use a number of sources of feedback to reflect on the success of the blended learning approach, including discussion with staff and students, external examiners’ reports, student surveys, and so on. Schools and Faculties should use the following measures to define and report success, setting clear, realistic and aspirational targets in their local context:

- Scores and feedback on student satisfaction surveys (e.g. NSS, Programme Survey, Postgraduate experience survey) in relation to quality of teaching, quality of resources, services and experience.

- Judgements and comments from internal and external quality assurance exercises (e.g. internal QA reviews; External Examiner reports; PSRB reports).

- Relevant graduate employability statistics (e.g. Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) report).

- Usage statistics for institutional digital technologies and services (e.g. Multimedia repositories; event capture systems; external digital learning channels).

- Informal feedback from students and staff about engagement with, and effectiveness of, blended learning.
Implementation and timescales

11. The Blended Learning Action Plan for MaPS should be considered, agreed and monitored annually by the MaPS Blended Learning Committee, with support from the MaPS Academic Blended Learning Champion, and by the Faculty Taught Student Education Committee.

The MaPS Blended Learning Committee and the MaPS Academic Blended Learning Champion will also contribute as requested to the production of, and monitoring of progress against, action plans for individual Schools and/or programme teams.

November 2014
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action plan</th>
<th>Programme-focused</th>
<th>Educationally appropriate</th>
<th>Research-based</th>
<th>Optimising contact time</th>
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<td>To what extent do we already achieve this in MaPS?</td>
<td>Module and Programme Review provides the opportunity for teams to consider the teaching methods being used. Currently, some BL forms a part of the student experience for all programmes within MaPS.</td>
<td>Plenty of examples of good practise in MaPS which are inspiring other staff to adopt similar approaches: e.g. use of videos to promote lab skills in Chemistry, Nutrition students prepare blogs and podcasts about dietary habits, use of Socrative (phone-based e-voting) for student-guided revision sessions in Maths.</td>
<td>Current examples of good practise include training on the use of specialist software and databases in Chemistry, training in literature searching for Chemistry students, Nutrition students use Excel and WinDiets dietary analysis software.</td>
<td>Examples of good practise include the use of online assessments, e-submission of reports (and e-feedback) and ‘flipped’ teaching in Chemistry, online MCQs used prior to laboratory sessions, plus online marking and feedback for assignments in FSN.</td>
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<td>High quality content</td>
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<td>All digital learning materials, whether produced internally or sourced from external open educational resources, should be relevant and fit for purpose.</td>
<td>All tools and digital materials should be designed with mobile technologies in mind, normally made available ahead of time and be accessible to all students.</td>
<td>Innovation and effective use should be made of existing physical spaces to enhance learning.</td>
<td>Graduate-level digital literacy skills should be developed to enhance employability.</td>
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<td>It is believed that all resources currently used in MaPS fit this requirement – student feedback and module/programme review should expose any resources that are inadequate, e.g. FSN MSc students use online learning material on hygiene design developed by internationally known academics.</td>
<td>Currently, the majority of learning material is provided through the VLE and can be accessed by different devices. Examples of good practise include a YouTube channel for Chemistry laboratory videos, allowing access on all devices, Youtube videos on statistical analysis of experimental design data in R available to MSc students in FSN, LUTube videos illustrating results and techniques in calculus plus lecture notes formatted for e-reader screens in Maths.</td>
<td>Students have access to computer clusters, laboratories etc. e.g. in Chemistry, the number of PCs available has been increased, laptops are available for students to use in the Priestley laboratory.</td>
<td>Numerous examples of good practise exist e.g. in Chemistry, students receive training on generic and specialised software (e.g. Excel, Maple), on literature searching etc. Students are encouraged to engage with online communities e.g. LinkedIn. FSN students receive training on statistical and other specialised software.</td>
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<td>The requirement to consider BL specifically in the module/programme review paperwork should further help to audit content. School representatives on the MaPS BL committee should take a specific interest. The BL Champion / BL committee can also advise programme teams who are considering introducing new tools or materials.</td>
<td>Accessibility: Staff should be encouraged to ensure that all new resources satisfy the University’s requirements regarding accessibility and conform to best practise <a href="http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/techdis">http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/techdis</a> Availability: All staff should be encouraged to make material available in good time and via platforms such as the VLE and Mediasite which are not device-specific.</td>
<td>Use of formal lecture theatres may decrease slightly if ‘flipped’ teaching is more widely adopted, however it is expected that formal lectures will remain the dominant form of teaching. Space for flexible learning and PC availability must be preserved.</td>
<td>The University is creating an online digital literacy module which should be made available to all students, and engagement with this should be promoted.</td>
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<td>Higher quality resources may require more time to prepare which may have resource implications. Again, support from learning technologists may be needed.</td>
<td>The School representatives on the BL committee and the MaPS BL webpages should promote good practise, but additional training may be needed.</td>
<td>Resources may be needed to preserve and extend flexible learning spaces within Schools.</td>
<td>The possibility for students to create online content (e.g. using Mediasite desktop recorder) creates new teaching opportunities, but realising these will require staff time for training and monitoring outputs.</td>
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