

A smooth blend for SCD students?

Blended Learning was the topic for discussion at the recent ACODE* Workshop in Brisbane.

Participants from most major universities across Australia and New Zealand attended the workshop at QUT, Garden City Campus. Diane Hockridge represented the SCD.

Blended Learning—Overview

There was general agreement among participants that “blended learning” tends to be an ill-defined, ambiguous term which makes research in the field difficult. In practice, though, “blended learning” can be a useful term to describe the sort of teaching and learning that is currently taking place in many Australian institutions. As lecturers begin incorporating new technologies into their teaching we find that the distinction between face to face and distance learning is becoming

blurred. Typical tertiary courses include a blend of both online and face to face experiences.

This is certainly true of SCD Colleges, which are each offering a different “blend” of learning experiences for their students.

developments in distance, online and blended learning. In some ways, being a smaller institution brings the advantages of being able to try out approaches and technologies without constraints such as using particular learning management systems.

But how can we work out the best “blend” for our students?

Presenters Caroline Steele and Shirley Reushle at the ACODE workshop suggested this definition of blended learning:

“A dynamic and thoughtful fusion in which context, beliefs, vision, technology, theory, pedagogy, & learning and teaching spaces are inseparably interwoven.”

This reminds us that there are many elements involved in putting together a good course. It’s not only about the content, though this is important;

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Though we are a small educational institution in comparison with some of the bigger universities, we are keeping pace with

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Blended Learning

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Spotlight on Resources: ePortfolios Conference

There’s a lot of talk around ePortfolios in higher education at the moment. What is an ePortfolio? How could you use them in teaching and learning and why would you want to?

Find out at the **ePortfolios Australia Conference 2010** being held in Melbourne from 3-4 November. This conference will bring together national and inter-

national educators and thought leaders to showcase current e-portfolio practices and the ways e-portfolios support learners to transition between education and



training, employment and industry areas. Themed Widening participation - engaging the

learner, the conference will be one of the first cross sectoral e-portfolio events in Australia with presenters and delegates from vocational education and training (VET), higher education (HE) and adult and community education (ACE).

For more detail visit: <http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/content/e-portfolios-australia>.



“A dynamic and thoughtful fusion in which context, beliefs, vision, technology, theory, pedagogy, & learning and teaching spaces are inseparably interwoven.”

A Smooth Blend for SCD Students (cont'd)

we also need to think about how to help students learn that content effectively in a variety of contexts.

Across the SCD many of our academic staff are working on developing this sort of “dynamic and thoughtful fusion”. This is an exciting and challenging shift in the way we are teaching. It represents a more student-centred approach to learning. We are moving from a focus on how we define courses and students, (online, face to face, distance, flexible), to a focus on finding the best blend of teaching approaches to use in each context.

Ideally our decisions about how to teach and present courses and whether to use face to face, online or other approaches will be driven by good pedagogy, rather than budgetary, time or other organizational constraints.

The SCD [Teaching & Learning Enhancement Plan](#) provides us with clear goals and a framework for our pedagogical approach:

“Goal 3: To provide a learning environment which fosters increased independence in learning, and a higher degree of student-centeredness in the process.

Goal 4: To develop flexibility in teaching practice through innovations and increased student engagement in learning.”



These goals are intended to guide our decisions about course design and assessment and learning activities, as well as our choices about how and where we teach and what technologies we may use.

The [Distance Education Handbook](#)

provides more detailed guidelines for academic staff in how to design, deliver, resource and evaluate high quality courses for students who may not be always sitting in our classrooms.

Over the past twelve months many other resources have been prepared to support and develop our expertise in distance, online and blended learning; such as this newsletter and a range of resources on the [Coursework Sandpit Wiki](#).

The Distance Education Committee is also working on accessing professional development resources to further equip academic staff so we can get our teaching and learning blend “just right”.

More details on professional development in a future issue of this newsletter

*ACODE= Australasian Council of Open, Distance & E-learning. Find out more at: <http://acode.edu.au/>

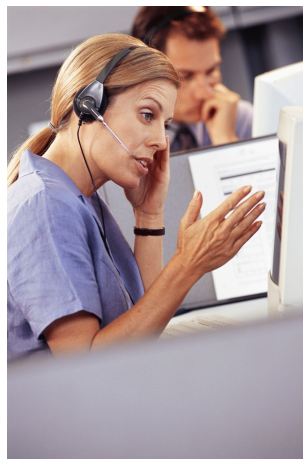


What’s happening in the SCD?

The Distance Education Committee has been trialing the use of web-conferencing technologies as an alternative to phone conferencing for its meetings.

The advantages of web-conferencing include real-time visual and audio connection, and the ability to share and simultaneously view documents and other data online.

So far we have trialed Adobe Connect Web-Conferencing,



thanks to Booth College, and “TokBox”, a free web-conferencing facility.

Both met with mixed success. Some users experienced difficulty with connection, or picture quality or sound. If some of these problems can be ironed out, committee members think that web-conferencing is definitely an improvement on phone conferencing for those who attend meetings remotely.



Spotlight on Teaching: What's Your Blend?



There are many ways to use technology in teaching and learning and SCD Member Institutions are enthusiastically and creatively introducing a variety of technologies to enhance their teaching. Here are just a few examples:

Booth College: has invested in Adobe Connect Package which includes a web-conferencing component allowing real time online audio, video and text communication between participants as well as resources for developing online learning resources.

Booth intends to start using these resources for online courses in Semester 2 this year.

Booth College has also purchased two interactive podiums for classrooms which include computer, audio & video recording, and projection facilities. Any laptop or memory stick can be plugged in to the podium eliminating complicated set ups of data projectors etc. The podiums have the same functionality as smart boards but the added benefits of being able to be used by the lecturer as a teaching podium from which any electronic or web-based resources can be accessed, displayed and recorded.

ACOM: are converting more units from study package mode to online using their customised "Janison" learning management system.

ACOM has developed a blend of face-to-face facilitations, virtual orientation sessions, online learning experiences and mentoring to equip their students for ministry.

Emmaus: since the introduction of the first online unit, via a self-developed Moodle learning management system, at this time last year, Emmaus college has discovered that online learning has the added benefit of attracting new students. Enrolment has increased four-fold in the last 12 months.

Emmaus has also had success in recording lectures using Vimeo.



BBI: in 2009 BBI introduced online learning and is gradually transferring most units from the traditional study package format to online mode. A customised learning management system designed by Fraynetworks is in use.

Good Shepherd College: finds that the Moodle learning management system serves their purposes well. Lecturers are continually adding to the number of units available online and seeking to develop more engaging ways of teaching in online environments.

GSC has developed a questionnaire to help students prepare for the challenges of the online environment.

NTC: has decided to specialise in using technology for synchronous learning and has recently

invested in a state of the art video conferencing equipment which allows them to teach and interact students not physically present in the classroom.

CIS: has recently installed Smart boards using "Active Inspire" software, as well as dedicated PCs and internet, in two main classrooms. This enables lecturers to teach interactively with the electronic display. In smaller classrooms lecturers use "tablets" and electronic pens to present learning materials via data projectors

St Andrews: having experimented with the use of a variety of technologies in teaching including wikis, skype, and other online resources, SAGOTC has spent the past few months preparing to introduce online learning for its Diploma and Masters students in 2011.

NSW CCPE: is investigating how to make good use of technology in supervision training. The college is considering developing online learning materials and resources, using web-conferencing, using online discussion forums and blogs for self-reflection and group reflection on topics of interest and improving practice

The college is also investigating the use of portfolios, specifically e-portfolios for reflective practice, and peer review of teaching and supervision.

Tell us what you are doing

Share your stories, ideas or experiences by emailing them to Diane Hockridge, SCD Distance Education Officer at dianeh@scd.edu.au.



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Newsletter Contributions

Contributions from all faculty and staff are encouraged. The *SCD distance and e-learning news* will be a more useful resource with input from a broad range of faculty and staff.

Send your contributions, comments and suggestions to Diane Hockridge, SCD Distance Education Officer at dianeh@scd.edu.au.

Monthly deadline for contributions: first Friday of each month. Next deadline Friday 6 August.

Newsletter is available online at the [Coursework Sandpit Wiki](#).