

DRAFT BLENDED AND DIGITAL LEARNING POLICY 2020/21

Intent

To identify and define the philosophy, scope, principles and procedures for the use of blended learning environments for students and staff at South Thames Colleges Group in order to enhance student learning, success and engagement and to impact positively on the student experience.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff and students and relates to aspects of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy, and the STC Group Strategic Plan.

Definitions

- Blended learning - refers to learning design that strategically, systematically and effectively integrates a range of face-to-face, online, mobile, distance, open, social and other technology enhanced learning across physical and virtual environments, as informed and driven by student needs and support for desired learning activities and learning outcomes.
- Flexible delivery - refers to how the timing, pace, content, assessment and location (in both virtual and physical environments) of learning can be varied, personalised and chosen by the student to suit their needs, whilst still meeting the desired learning outcomes. The extent of variability will be determined by course and/or subject requirements.
- Digital literacy - refers to the ability to locate, evaluate, choose, use and create technologies effectively, critically and safely for lifelong learning. Students require digital literacy to locate, engage, interact, create, share and communicate with a range of learning technologies in order to access subject information, participate in learning activities, collaborate with peers and complete assessment tasks. Staff require digital literacy to communicate, support, motivate and inspire learning for students in contemporary learning environments.
- Learning technologies - are defined as the broad range of communication, information and related technologies that can be used to support learning, teaching and assessment.
- Mode of delivery - refers to whether a subject is delivered internally, externally or via limited mode. Blended learning can, and should be, integrated into any subject regardless of mode of delivery.

Principles

Blended learning at South Thames Colleges Group is based on the following principles:

- Students are inspired, motivated and engaged to learn, through blended learning approaches that vary according to their appropriateness to the particular learning context.
- Staff are encouraged and supported to adopt fit-for-purpose and innovative blended learning approaches. These approaches are enabled by academic and professional partnerships and appropriate institutional investment in learning technologies.

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- Digital literacy is recognised as an important learner attribute and a core skill for academic staff.
- Flexible delivery options are offered to reflect the needs of students, the intended learning outcomes and the availability of resources.
- Blended learning will not always include flexible delivery and so will not always provide students a choice of where and when they can study.
- Blended learning and flexible delivery are chosen to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes and not just to reduce the costs of delivering teaching or to reduce teaching loads. In some circumstances, blended learning and flexible delivery may require increased investment of resources to ensure sustainable delivery of high-quality learning and teaching.
- Technology is considered an opportunity to capture data regarding patterns of student participation (learning analytics) to inform monitoring for at-risk students, to promote just-in-time learner support and to provide information to students.

1. Blended Learning Approaches

In order for students to be at the heart of the South Thames Colleges Group, blended learning approaches must:

1.1 Ensure the diversity of our students, their learning preferences, preparedness and the life circumstances that impact on student engagement with learning informs the design and choice of blended learning and flexible delivery approaches.

1.2 Ensure that students are provided with consistent and easy access to services, information, tools and resources necessary to facilitate and enable student learning and engagement.

1.3 Utilise approaches that enable and encourage interaction, collaboration and communication between students and staff and create a sense of belonging to our learning community.

1.4 Include opportunities to develop the digital literacy of students through orientation to virtual environments used for learning and teaching and in discipline specific contexts over the course of their programmes of learning.

2. Blended Learning course and subject design

In order for course and subject design to meet the principles set out in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy, those who design and teach must:

2.1 Design courses where blended learning approaches are embedded in overall curriculum design and are logically linked to learning outcomes.

2.2 Ensure learning technologies and face-to-face teaching approaches are chosen to best meet the desired course and subject learning outcomes and support student learning and engagement.

2.3 Regularly review blended learning approaches used in subjects across the whole course of study for applicability, relevance and best practice in relation to student needs and desired learning outcomes.

2.4 Ensure subjects use an appropriate/effective mode of technology to enable blended learning.

3. Implement Blended Learning across the South Thames Colleges Group

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In order to achieve blended learning across the Group, we will:

3.1 Ensure staff are recruited, trained, supported, resourced and recognised for effective and innovative blended learning approaches at an institutional level.

3.2 Invest in, research and support online infrastructure and learning spaces that allow for blended learning approaches, including online student feedback, analytics, online submission of assignments, student created content, student sharing of own content and personalised student communications.

Refer to Draft VLE and Blended Learning Statement 2020/21 and Draft Digital Skills for Staff

DRAFT Blended and Online Learning Procedure

Blended Learning Policy	Procedures
<p>Ensure the diversity of our students, their learning preferences, preparedness and the life circumstances that impact on student engagement with learning informs the design and choice of blended learning and flexible delivery approaches.</p>	<p>Assistant Principals will support Heads of School, in collaboration with Curriculum Teams and teaching staff, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the barriers for students in regards to access and engagement with learning. • Provide blended and flexible delivery options to support increased access to learning for diverse students, taking into account the resources available.
<p>Ensure that students are provided with consistent and easy access to services, information, tools and resources necessary to facilitate and enable student learning and engagement.</p>	<p>Information Technology Services (ITS) and Quality & Innovation (Q&I), in collaboration with College TLA Leads will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that learning management systems are sufficiently resourced to support blended learning and flexible delivery approaches in virtual environments. <p>ITS will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endeavour to ensure that video conferencing and audio visual services for on campus learning environments are maintained and functioning to support blended learning approaches using approved and agreed central Group technology and systems. • Ensure that the agreed level of off-campus equipment is provided to maximise flexible and blended approaches to deliver (staff) and access learning (students). <p>Facilities will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the agreed on-campus spaces are periodically upgraded, designed and equipped to maximise flexible and blended approaches to learning and teaching. <p>Curriculum Managers and teaching staff will:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure learning technologies used in subjects are appropriate and functional. • Provide relevant information on technology requirements for enrolment and successful completion of the subject and/or course. • Deliver subject content via learning technologies in a timely manner for student engagement and learning. • Evaluate the value and impact of the introduction of new technologies into subjects on student learning and engagement.
<p>Utilise approaches that enable and encourage interaction, collaboration and communication between students and staff and create a sense of belonging to the university learning community.</p>	<p>Curriculum Managers, with the support of Heads of School will support Subject Coordinators and teaching staff to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of physical and virtual learning environments to support and encourage collaboration between students and between students and staff. • Be orientated to, and familiar with using, the physical and virtual learning space (Teams and Moodle) that support collaboration and interaction between students and staff. <p>ITS, in collaboration with the College Principals, will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following agreement and sufficient resourcing of specific standard applications, ensure that a range of appropriate collaboration platforms and wireless networks are in-built and maintained in the learning management system to encourage and support staff and student collaboration in virtual and blended learning environments
<p>Include opportunities to develop the digital literacy of students through orientation to virtual environments used for learning and teaching and in discipline specific contexts over the course of their programme/course.</p>	<p>Q&I and Curriculum Managers will support Subject Coordinators and teaching staff to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide digital skills readiness programs, including targeted activities for students during Induction. • Include information on digital literacy requirements in course information provided to students. • Introduce and orientate students to digital technologies integral to learning in subjects (i.e. the use and layout of Moodle Courses) by the end of the Induction Week and/or first week of commencement of a programme/course. • Recommend appropriate intervention and support strategies for students to ensure the development of basic digital literacies required

	<p>for learning at South Thames Colleges Group and into progression routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, identify the digital literacy proficiency of students.
In order for course and subject design to meet the principles set out in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy, those who design and teach must:	
Design courses where blended learning approaches are embedded in overall curriculum design and are logically linked to learning outcomes.	<p>Quality & Innovation will support Curriculum, in collaboration with Subject Coordinators and teaching staff to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and utilise blended learning approaches that are coherently deployed across the course of study to support students to achieve intended course learning outcomes.
Ensure learning technologies and face-to-face teaching approaches are chosen to best meet the desired course and subject learning outcomes and support student learning and engagement.	<p>Subject Coordinators and teaching staff will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that for each subject learning technologies are chosen through considered pedagogical design. • Technology is chosen to support and enhance student learning outcomes, rather than to define or determine the learning outcomes and teaching methods. • Subject coordinators and relevant staff are orientated to, and familiar with using, any technologies used for learning and teaching in the course. • Consideration is given to the choice of learning spaces, where possible. • Ensure equivalence of resources, time and learning outcomes regardless of place, mode or approach to learning.
Regularly review blended learning approaches used in subjects across the whole course of study for applicability, relevance and best practice in relation to student needs and desired learning outcomes.	<p>Curriculum Managers will support Subject Coordinators and teaching staff to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly evaluate effectiveness of blended learning approaches in terms of supporting student access to learning, collaboration and assessment. • Commit to ongoing professional development and/or research in blended and technology enhanced learning approaches to ensure

	<p>contemporary and best practice in teaching and learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify processes to support staff during course redesign around blended learning.
Ensure subjects use a minimum standard of technology to enable blended learning.	<p>Curriculum Managers will support Subject Coordinators to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that for each subject the minimal requirements are maintained to enable teaching, learning and assessment as per the TLA Policy.
In order to implement blended learning across the South Thames Colleges Group, we must:	
Ensure staff are recruited, trained, supported, resourced and recognised for effective and innovative blended learning approaches at an institutional level.	<p>Assistant Principal, Quality & Innovation in collaboration with College Principals will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure resources are distributed to provide ongoing professional development of staff regarding innovative blended learning approaches and clearly considered pedagogical design. Staff are able to effectively utilise blended learning that can support and drive the strategic direction and continuing professional development for staff at the South Thames Colleges Group. <p>Curriculum Managers will support Subject Coordinators to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure teaching staff are orientated to technology used for learning in the subjects they are teaching into by their Area Line Managers
Invest in, research and support online infrastructure and learning spaces that allow for blended learning approaches, including online student feedback, analytics, online submission of assignments, student created content, student sharing of own content and personalised student communications.	<p>ITS and Q&I will, via the Digital Education & Transformation Strategy (DETS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure infrastructure of student feedback systems, learning management systems, wireless networks and online student services support Group-wide approaches to improving blended learning opportunities. Ensure all approaches to implementing new technologies to be evidence-based. This includes working effectively to adapt to changes in staff and student preferences which may include Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) approaches.