

## Update to the Blended Learning Strategy (2008-2011) for academic years 2010-12

The Blended Learning Strategy Working Group, under the auspices of UQEC, requested that the Blended Learning Strategy (BLS) be updated after its first year of implementation (2008/9) and in light of the changing University and national context.

### 1. Background – no update needed

### 2. External Drivers.

In addition to the drivers quoted in the previous BLS, several significant reports have been produced since the first BLS. These all support the University's aspirations around BL. In brief these are:

- (i) The publication of HIGHER AMBITIONS | The future of universities in a knowledge economy<sup>1</sup> (2009) by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills points to the need for flexible learning opportunities, citing among its key action on access to HE as being '4) We will expand new types of higher education programmes that widen opportunities for flexible study for young people and adults and reflect the reality of the modern working lives.' (p. 6).
- (ii) The SKILLS FOR GROWTH – The National Skills strategy<sup>2</sup> (2009) by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills also emphasises opportunities for flexible learning.
- (iii) HEFCE have updated their e-Learning Strategy<sup>3</sup> and in their revised approach HEFCE lists areas of e-learning activity which it recommends that HEIs use their block grant to foster.
- (iv) The JISC Publication - *Higher Education in a Web 2.0 World*<sup>4</sup> lays out the intersection between uses of Web 2.0 technologies to create communities and teaching and learning in HE. A salient quote from the study is: '*The time would seem to be right seriously and systematically to begin the process of renegotiating the relationship between tutor and student to bring about a situation where each recognises and values the other's expertise and capability and works together to capitalise on it. This implies drawing students into the development of approaches to teaching and learning.*'
- (v) The *Practical guide: bringing together e-learning & student retention*<sup>5</sup> –has suggestions for how the capabilities of technology can best assist with retaining learners.
- (vi) The JISC Infokit publication - *Effective Practice with e-Portfolios*<sup>6</sup> includes many case studies from University of Wolverhampton, demonstrating the leading edge practice of many of our staff in this domain.
- (v) The Jisc TechDis publication – *Informing Policy, Improving Practice: making the student experience more inclusive through technology*<sup>7</sup> has been published and is used to guide our inclusive approach.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bis.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/publications/Higher-Ambitions-Summary.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bis.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/publications/Skills-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09\\_12/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_12/)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/documents/heweb2.aspx>

<sup>5</sup>

<http://mancons2.middlesex.wikispaces.net/file/view/Practical+Guide+%28Anagnostopoulou+%26+Parmar%2C+2008%29.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/themes/elearning/eportfolios/effectivepracticeeportfolios.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.techdis.ac.uk/index.php?p=3\\_10\\_19\\_1](http://www.techdis.ac.uk/index.php?p=3_10_19_1)

### 3. Internal Drivers

Further major internal University drivers for the BLS which have emerged over the last year are, in brief:

- (i) The Learning Works (Refocusing the Undergraduate Curriculum)<sup>8</sup> will see all undergraduate modules redesigned and revalidated over the next academic years (2009/10/11). A central design principle will be the appropriate use of blended learning in the six areas specified by the strategy.
- (ii) The University has articulated aspirations for three graduate attributes which could be manifest in the course redesigns undertaken in Learning Works, one of which is Digital Literacy. Among the ways in which Digital Literacy could be developed in course specific flavours are:
  - a) through the 'e' aspects of the learning process, as in the [Blended Learning entitlements](#) – so that digital literacy is being developed through the **process** of engagement with 'e' materials, tasks, Personal Development Planning and collaborative learning;
  - b) introductions to specific, hopefully cutting edge technologies, software and the skills of their use – ready for employment; and
  - c) the development of relevant information literacy capability.Thus (a) provides another internal driver for the development of Blended Learning.
- (iii) The University has set up iCD to broker learning in local SMEs, much of which will be through e-learning
- (iv) The University, through ILE, hosts the Blended Learning Unit, and this provides School-linked advisers who support each School with their work on blended learning. This increases the University's capacity to support staff with designing fully Blended Learning courses.
- (v) The Postgraduate portfolio is to be redesigned and revalidated ready for the start of academic year 2011.

### 4. The strategy

Since the approval of the BLS in summer 2008, the Learning Works project has been initiated. The development of all undergraduate modules will be a priority for staff and so it is recognised that targets for the BLS next year, which are for modules which will not be taught again, are unlikely to be met, and the evaluation of the targets in these will not be a priority. A key element of the Learning Works project however is integration of blended learning into all modules.

Following the evaluation report from the BLS 2008/9, objective 5 needs clarification. Objective 5 is:

*5. submit all appropriate assessments online;*

The full benefits of e-submission are only realised if staff also e-mark and e-annotate scripts. These benefits are: environmental, with around ¼ million paper-based assessments being submitted annually; reduced student printing costs; increased

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.wlv.ac.uk/Default.aspx?page=20535>

number of on-time submissions, and legible, speedier feedback to students. At present many staff who used e-submission are then printing out scripts to hand mark.

The evaluation of the BL Strategy 2008/9 showed indicative take up of around 30% of submitted summative work. For Schools to be able to fully embrace e-submission it is financially unrealistic if marking then takes place on paper, as it means that costs of around £1 million will be transferred to Schools.

It should remain a University aspiration to move to e-marking but this would need to be a larger, specific, fully-costed project, to be undertaken at a later date, and following an evaluated pilot project which laid bare the issues and risks.

It is proposed that 'appropriate' be further qualified and interpreted as meaning where the assessment has been designed to be carried out, completed and marked entirely electronically. This will include such uses as (i) where the marker will mark and annotate electronically, (ii) where the submission is an aspect of PebblePad such as a webfolio, or (iii) involves the use of a Forum in WOLF.

The new objective will thus read:

*5. submit all assessments online in all modules where assessments have been designed for e-submission, or where staff use e-feedback, e-marking and / or e-annotation.*

The redesign of summative assessments for Learning Works needs staff to consider whether these might be better in a format which was conducive to e-submission and e-marking.

Where e-submission is used Registry need to be informed that this, and not student offices, will receive assessments.

The targets for 2010/12, given the caveat outlined in the first paragraph of this section, are listed in section 8 of this BLS update, below.

## **5. Blended Learning Strategy Targets 2010/12 (amended)**

The Blended Learning Strategy targets have been amended in the light of (a) Learning Works; and (b) the issues around e-submission, Objective 5.

(a) Given the Learning Works project which means that all Undergraduate modules taught in 2009/10 will be taught for the final time, it is likely that staff energies will be targeted at redesigning their modules ready for 2010 or 2011, and thus that significant Blended Learning developments for current modules may not be the highest priority. The original interim targets for 2009/10 (as in Column 2 below) are to be subsumed into the results of Learning Works and thus achieved in modules taught in 2010-12. Thus, the original targets are to be met through Learning Works and through the module redesigns which this project entails and achieved in all modules run in 2010/11/12.

(b) The original Blended Learning Strategy's targets (column 2) and the amended Objective 5 for the six blended learning student entitlements are below.

<b>Updated Blended Learning Strategy targets 2009-12</b>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Targets for Level 1 and 2 in the original strategy (for 2009/10)</b>	<b>Revised Strategy Targets for 2010/12 (the only change affects Objective 5)</b>
1. have access to a digital copy of all lecturer-produced course documents.	All documents to be available for all University courses	All documents to be available for all University courses
2. have formative assessment/s opportunities on line with meaningful electronic assessment feedback	All level 1 and level 2 modules to have at least one significant on-line formative assessment early in the module.	All modules to have at least one significant on-line formative assessment early in the module.
3. collaborate on line with others in their learning cohort	All level 1 and Level 2 modules to have collaborative learning systems and opportunities promoted.	All modules to have collaborative learning systems and opportunities promoted.
4. participate in ePDP (NB this is by student and thus by course)	All level 1 and 2 students to have undertaken ePDP to evidence their key transferable employability skills.	All students to have undertaken ePDP to evidence their key transferable employability skills.
5. submit all (appropriate) assessments online	Used in all level 1 and 2 University modules where appropriate	Used in all modules where assessments have been designed for e-submission, or where staff use e-feedback, e-marking and / or e-annotation.
6. engage in interactive learning during all face to face sessions.	All face to face sessions to incorporate interactive learning.	All face to face sessions to incorporate interactive learning.

Objective 6 is to be addressed within the University's new transitional Teaching and Learning Strategy 2010-12.

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