



Syllabus and Class Structure Guide for Blended Learning

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Introduction

While many students use technology in their everyday lives, they do not necessarily have a great deal of experience applying these skills in the classroom. Kemp (2013) found that students in the UAE were accustomed to highly structured learning environments, and thus preferred more detailed explanations of tasks, structured guidelines around assignments, workshops teaching them additional skills (e.g. teaching students how to use Google Docs), and clear criteria for evaluation, especially for group work. Therefore, it is important to create a clear syllabus that outlines the course structure and grading policy, to communicate with students on a regular basis to provide them with course updates and upcoming deadlines, and to give students many opportunities to ask questions both inside and outside of class.

Syllabus

Whether you are designing a new syllabus or altering an existing syllabus, you will need to modify it to match the blended learning model used in your course. Below are some course elements that your syllabus should cover:

- The rationale for why you are using a blended format for the class
- Detailed instructions about how to locate and access different types of course materials from various sources (e.g. the edX platform, the library, other LMS platforms, Google Documents, etc.)
- Detailed descriptions of the various in-class activities that students will be engaging in
- A clear rubric outlining how students will be evaluated in the course
- Discussion and collaboration guidelines for your students
- Expectations around out of class time commitments and tasks (video watching, assignments, group meeting, etc.)
- Indicate what you expect your students to have accomplished before each class session, and the potential penalties for not coming to class prepared
- A printer-friendly schedule that includes assignments and due dates

Course Structure

Because the course structure for a blended courses is often very different from traditional courses, it is

important not only to tell students about these changes, but also to demonstrate them. Therefore, we recommend that you use the first week of class as an orientation to expose students to the expectations and requirements for the course. During this orientation you should:

- Walk students through the syllabus
- Show them how to navigate through the edX platform
- Break down one week's worth of coursework as an example to set student expectations
- Prepare a sample in-class activity for students to feel what it is like to collaborate with each other.

Additionally, as you introduce new elements to the course, we suggest creating either sample lessons or demos. These may include:

- Creating a small discussion and group assignment for students to complete in class,
- Conducting a case analysis in class,
- Demonstrating how to find credible online resources for assignments,
- Using online or offline computer applications (e.g. Google Docs, Powerpoint, Excel, etc.)

Lastly, throughout the course, you should maintain a high level of interaction with your students. You should send regular updates to students, monitor their in-class and out-of-class interactions, provide them with opportunities to meet with you, and gather feedback whenever possible.

References

Kemp, L.J. (2013). Introducing blended learning: an experience of uncertainty for students in the United Arab Emirates. *Research in Learning Technology*, 21, 1-13.