



Blended Learning at MIT

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What is Blended Learning?

There are many definitions of blended learning yet no single accepted definition. We define blended learning as structured opportunities to learn, which use more than one learning or training method, inside or outside the classroom.

This definition includes different learning or **instructional methods** (lecture, discussion, guided practice, reading, games, case study, simulation), different **delivery methods** (live classroom or computer mediated), different **scheduling** (synchronous or asynchronous) and different **levels of guidance** (individual, instructor or expert led, or group/social learning).

Blended learning offers the potential to create effective training, to save time and money for the Institute, to make training more engaging and convenient for learners, and to offer learning professionals the chance to innovate.

What is the evidence of its success?

There is little research evidence other than anecdotal which points to the success of blended learning. There is however, overwhelming evidence of its implementation, growth and evolution over decades. We believe a blended approach meets learning and organizational goals and can satisfy a return on expectations (ROE).

What is the vision and strategy for blended learning at MIT?

Blended learning allows MIT to integrate a rich array of learning opportunities – distributed and convenient – triggered by many needs and situations. Learning becomes the mutual responsibility of workers and those who are responsible for creating a workforce worthy of MIT. Training professionals will be regarded as learning architects and curators of sources and resources.

Individuals will see work as learning how to address unique situations, recognize where to turn for learning, support and advice; and formally or informally share that knowledge widely with others. The “course” will be replaced with multiple opportunities to learn and grow on the path to successful, rewording careers. MIT will be known as an exceptional place to develop outstanding skills and abilities through a range of blended experiences.

We must have a strategy to achieve such a vision. We recommend that those responsible for training:

- Provide appropriate support for learners (time, technology, guidance)
- Develop clear learning and performance goals
- Make objective decisions based on the best learning outcomes (not cost, or prestige)
- Make collaborative decisions (across departments, from learner’s perspective)
- Obtain visible, enthusiastic management support
- Move basic skill development to eLearning and use the classroom for more advanced topics
- Choose low-hanging fruit, start slowly and build

What are some caveats when considering blended learning?

- Blended learning must adhere to the same goals and disciplines as other learning programs. It must include clearly defined outcomes, be effective, relevant, and applicable on the job, and aim to achieve measurable learning.
- A blended solution may work perfectly in one case but not necessarily in another.
- Blended options can add to development and deployment time and require extra resources, particularly where there are multiple stakeholders.
- Blended options place a greater responsibility on designers to ensure that experiences are well-structured and learning is consolidated.
- Technology must be available and working.

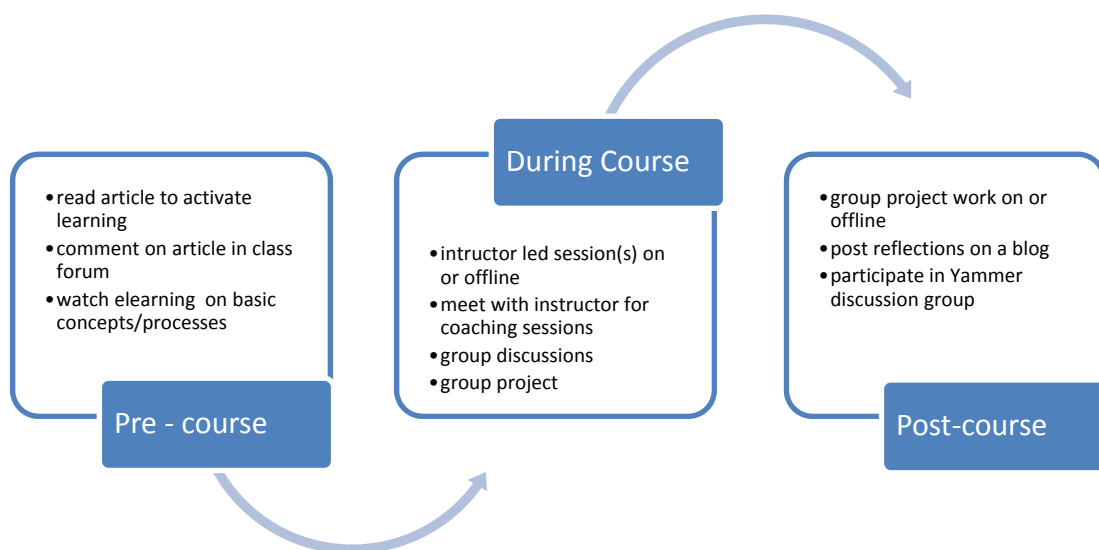
What are the delivery methods for a blended approach?

Blended approaches reflect a combination of the following factors.

Schedule:	synchronous	↔	asynchronous
Guidance:	instructor-led	↔	self-paced
Technology:	online	↔	offline
Participation:	individual	↔	group

Examples

	Individual (IN)	Group (GR)	Instructor (IS)
Online (ONL)	- Research online - Create a wiki or online document - Take an elearning course - Write a blog	- Participate in a discussion forum - Review other's work remotely - Create a report, presentation remotely - Watch a lecture online and discuss remotely	- Coaching (online) - Advising on project - Case study with feedback - Synchronous class online (e.g., WebEx)
Offline (OFL)	- Read articles, books - Keep a journal - Write a paper	- Group project work - Field Trip - Guest lecturer	- In-class lecture - Hands on with feedback - Coaching (face to face) - Advising on project - Case study with feedback





What are the decision factors for blending methods?

Content & Learner Questions

1. What do you want people to know or do? How difficult is the desired performance?
2. What are the skills and knowledge required for success?
3. How experienced is your audience with this content? What other audience characteristics might affect decisions about design or delivery?

Instructional Strategy Questions

1. What learning techniques would be most appropriate and effective for this audience, e.g., is hands-on practice necessary, social learning?
2. **Which training delivery methods would be most effective for each portion of the content, e.g., classroom, computer-mediated?**
3. What additional resources would help learners achieve success?

Logistical Questions

1. How many people will participate in this training?
2. What is the deadline for completion of the training program?
3. How much development time is required and what resources are available?
4. Would it be necessary to have subject matter experts (SMEs) available for questions?
5. How frequently will revisions be needed?

When these questions have been answered and a decision to blend has been made, see the [MIT Training Delivery Guide](#) to determine instruction strategies.

Resources

The following resources were influential to our thinking and are listed for your reference.

Creating a Premium Blend? 20 Questions and a Case Study – Learning Solutions article by Gina Ann Orefice
<http://www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/279/creating-a-premium-blend-20-questions-and-a-case-study>

Make it Blended – Blog Post by Taruna Goel
<http://tarunagoel.blogspot.com/2010/04/make-it-blended.html>

MIT Training Delivery Guide – Delivery Method Matrix by Kate Kibbee and Jeanette Gerzon
<http://web.mit.edu/training/trainers/guide/deliver/train-guide-matrix.pdf>