

Educational Development - A Blended Approach

A blended approach to learning and teaching is focused on enriching the lecture and classroom environment using a range of strategies including online learning activities. The aim is to actively engage students and enhance learning outcomes using a time-efficient and sustainable approach. A new workshop program in a blended mode has been developed to support staff members who wish to adopt a blended approach. The program will enable staff to identify learning needs that may be met and benefits that can be achieved from course enhancements that make effective use of online learning.

This program will enable staff members to apply their training in the use of Vista to greater effect, to gain the benefits of applying innovative pedagogical approaches to online course design.

In support of the UNSW Learning and Teaching Plan, the aims of the program are to:

- Support course designers and teachers to enhance the student learning experience and outcomes.
- Enable teaching staff to improve efficiency in teaching through effective use of technology.
- Support commitment to the UNSW Guidelines on Learning and Teaching.
- Explore the pedagogical and technological dimensions of flexible learning.
- Allow staff to experience a blended model during the program.
- Promote a 'communities of practice' approach to learning and teaching.

Vista training as module instructor and designer is necessary for this program. Advanced Vista tools workshops will also be available to complement the program.

Outcomes for participants

Following the blended program participants will:

- Develop an eLearning application for their course using a blended approach.
- Develop an evaluation plan.
- Be able to plan further eLearning developments drawing upon EDTeC resource materials, advanced Vista training workshops and consultancy services for support.

Activities

The blended program has the following outline.

A blended approach to active learning

Blended learning combines eLearning with face-to-face teaching and learning to gain the maximum benefit in quality and efficiency from both modes. This initial workshop is focused on designing and developing learning activities that engage students and make effective use of a blended approach. Participants use a design process that starts with

their own aims and reflects upon the UNSW Guidelines for Learning and Teaching to develop active learning strategies, activities and resources to enhance student learning, and go on to build these into a Vista course. The program has three facilitated workshops (see Figure 1):

1. A design workshop in which aims and goals are used to design learning activities.
2. A planning workshop to focus further development of learning activities and resources.
3. A building workshop in which hands-on support is provided to build a Vista course that supports blended learning and incorporates the learning activities and resources.

The overall program includes preparatory consultations, and additional online consultation and support for design and development between face-to-face workshops as outlined in Figure 1. This may be ongoing after the building workshop if needed by the participants.

Optional additional workshops

Creating and implementing engaging and effective assessment activities

This workshop is focused on assessment as an integral part of the learning and teaching process using a blended approach. Participants are introduced to a range of effective assessment strategies and methods, and consider how online technologies can be applied to enable the strategies using Vista. Participants will have the opportunity to reconsider the way that assessment is used in their course.

A blended approach to collaborative learning – Using online discussions and group activities

This workshop considers the benefits of collaborative learning for both individual tasks and group work. Online collaboration can enable all students to actively participate in discussions and to learn in a deeper and more reflective way through regular analysis and discussion of course topics. Online discussion can be an important means of enabling or supporting group learning activities and group projects. This workshop models a collaborative approach to encourage participants to investigate the issues and approaches associated with online collaboration for blended learning, and then design and build collaborative activities for their own courses in Vista

Program structure and configuration

'A blended approach to active learning' is a program focussing on educational design, online course planning, and building the course in Vista. The optional additional workshops are thematic and open to people who wish to take particular approaches to online course development. These may be integrated with the program or considered separately.

The program can be reconfigured to suit the needs of any particular group of staff. Initial negotiations will focus on the interests and needs of the participants and can be adapted to meet particular requirements.

Basic Vista training is a prerequisite/corequisite for the program. The workshops are not intended to be Vista training. They may, however, incorporate aspects of advanced training in specific topics such as using online discussions. They may also be offered in coordination with more advanced Vista training workshops if that suits the needs of a participant group.

A Blended Approach to Active Learning

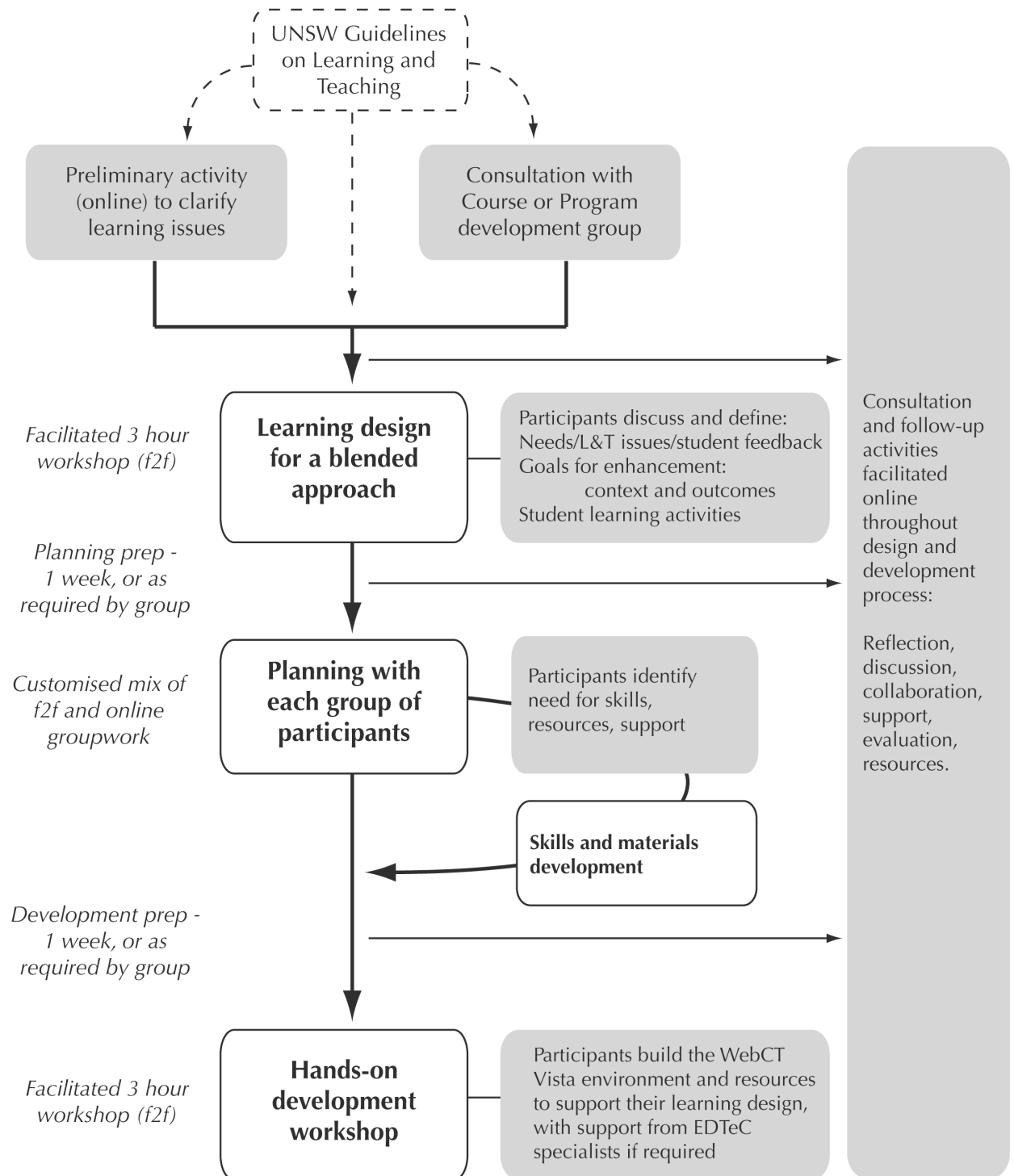


Figure 1. The design, plan, build program

Timing and location

The program can be offered at any time that is suitable for a participant group, in any location that has sufficient access to computers. A schedule of workshops will depend on the availability of and demand from staff members who wish support for educational development and who are committed to undertaking the development of an online course within an agreed time frame.

Initial workshops will be offered in the week June 13 – 16, 2006. Follow-up workshops and support activities will be arranged to suit the timeframe of the participants, with the aim of having enhanced online courses ready for second session. Figure 1 illustrates the arrangement of workshops and associated development and support processes.

Articulation to the Graduate Certificate in University Learning and Teaching

This program using the design, plan and build sequence parallels the process and activities used in the 'Educational Technology in Learning and Teaching' course in the Graduate Certificate program. This course has the requirement of an assessable paper and assessment of the quality of the online course materials as a reflection of the pedagogic intentions of the course development. The addition of an analytical paper to the new program would enable this design and development task to gain credit towards the Graduate Certificate.