



# BlendEd Project

## Transforming the Learning Experience

### 1. Overview

BlendEd is a collaborative project, led by Reid Kerr College, that is introducing a pedagogically sound blended delivery model within HNC Social Care and HND Business. The emphasis is on producing a practical working model which clearly demonstrates the benefits for institutions and their students. 'Blended Learning' is a hybrid of traditional face-to-face and online learning where learning takes place both in the classroom and online with the online component forming a natural extension of traditional learning. Whilst the project has considerable output in terms of content and has developed substantial knowledge in management of electronic content, the emphasis is primarily on delivery where BlendEd developed resources are the vehicle for moving the delivery model forward. The development and delivery of resources is staggered over 2 phases.

The BlendEd Consortium Partners and activities are made up of:

- Reid Kerr College (Lead Partner, Managing, Developing, Peer Reviewing and Piloting)
- Cardonald College (Developing, Peer Reviewing and Piloting)
- Dundee College (Developing, Peer Reviewing and Piloting)
- Glasgow College of Nautical Studies (Developing, Peer Reviewing and Piloting)
- Langside College (Developing, Peer Reviewing and Piloting)
- Coatbridge (Peer Reviewing and Piloting)
- Colleges Open Learning Exchange Group (COLEG)
- JISC Regional Support Centre. Scotland (South & West)

### 2. Progress and Activities

The project has made considerable progress in receiving all deliverables outlined in the Project Plan and Consortium Agreement.

#### 2.1. Learning Plans

38 Phase 1 and 2 Learning Plans have been submitted covering 44 SQA HN credits. This progresses toward another project aim whereby the topic based approach of the Plans affords the blending of delivery methodologies. They facilitate a flexible delivery pattern which can respond both to the educational and lifestyle needs of learners, curriculum changes and the variance of delivery approaches from one college to another or from the teaching plan of one staff member to another.

#### 2.2. Developed Resources

All Phase 1 Resources have been submitted as content packages to the BlendEd Workspace. Templates and the Metadata generator are ready for Phase 2 Resources, which are due for submission in June.



## 2.3. Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance Procedure has been successfully developed. It is a series of processes required to ensure that developed resources meet a sufficient standard to be distributed as educational learning materials. Each process within the QA procedure focuses on a particular area of quality which, once assessed, can move on to the next.

The key processes are broken down as below:

1. Development staff work to a set of clearly defined and consistent standards and guidelines
2. Sample technical checks are carried out on file formats, hierarchies etc.
3. Resources are subjected to an Internal QA review
4. Resources are Externally Peer Reviewed
5. Resources are Edited and Proofed through the External Production Edit
6. Random sampling is carried out to check for technical issues

A Procedure Section of the Cookbook is dedicated to explaining Quality Assurance and an online management system. Known to users as the BlendEd Workspace, has been developed and is proactively used by all parties involved to manage the QA workflow.

### 2.3.1. External Peer Review

All 17 Phase 1 External Peer Reviewers were recruited before Christmas. The project team provided a training workshop on the BlendEd project and QA process to reviewers. Reviews on all Phase 1 content packages are close to completion with the majority of peer recommended changes agreed upon. Updated packages are available in the BlendEd Workspace.

All, but one, Phase 2 External Peer Reviewers have been recruited. Most are from Phase 1 therefore a Phase 2 QA training workshop will not be provided however the project team will provide on-site training to new reviewers.

### 2.3.2. Production Edit

Phase 1 packages are now being processed through external editors to complete the Edit and Proof Reading processes of the Production Edit.

## 2.4. Delivery Pilot

### 2.4.1. Pilot Training

A training package using the BlendEd method has been set up for staff piloting the units now and after the summer break. The course has a primary framework as a guide but affords each college the flexibility to deliver training as it sees fit. The course is a precursor to a general training course for teaching staff who will deliver BlendEd units in the future. It includes:

- Suggested Outline Training Programme for Staff
- What Is a VLE?
- Blended Approach to Delivery
- Teaching and Learning Strategies
- Learning Strategies for Students
- Management Strategies for Online Tutors



- Some Problems the Online Student Faces
- Support Tools
- Tutor's Role

#### **2.4.2. Pilot Feedback**

With the pilots well underway each piloting college has had the chance to upload content packages into their VLE and address any technical issues. Being IMS compliant it has been an opportunity to assess the interoperability of packages across variety of VLEs, whether IMS compliance is required or not.

Methods of capturing evaluation data from the ongoing pilots have been implemented.

Checklists and questionnaires are being used to capture quantitative data of the delivery pilot.

Methods to capture qualitative data include:

- Electronically recorded interviews with lecturers
- Electronically recorded interviews with learners
- Learner focus groups
- Learner discussion forums within college VLEs
- Use of external project, The Learner Experience of e-Learning (LEX), to conduct and make available research on unit pilots across colleges.

#### **2.4.3. Cross College Pilot Forum**

The BlendEd Workspace has an area for the piloting of each unit. Each unit has a discussion forum. Colleges within and out with the consortium have agreed to pilot and include the forum link within their VLEs to facilitate a cross college lecturing staff peer discussion on the BlendEd units and piloting experience.

#### **2.4.4. Phase 2 Delivery Schedule**

Colleges are being consulted on their timetables after the summer break in order that the schedule for Phase 2 pilots can be drawn up centrally. Units that will be delivered first can be prioritised for support.

### **2.5. Staff Development**

Staff development is continuous throughout the project. Some activities are described below:

#### **2.5.1. Course Analysis**

Workshops were held in individual colleges and centrally to identify development priorities. These workshops involved curricular staff and course leaders from each partner and this level of involvement was welcomed by those attending.

#### **2.5.2. BLT Cascading**

The JISC regional support centre Scotland South and West provided a comprehensive training program for the 7 BLTs during phase 1. These skills have been cascaded to the 38 other development staff during the course of working with BLTs to develop resources.

Peer reviewers and piloting staff also benefit from training workshops and cascaded skills through involvement with the project.



### 3. Support Structures

Project staff are supported by the activities of various project groups or teams. Each group meet regularly will either, discuss progress of the project overall, deal with issues that pertain to the group's role within the project, build upon support structures and develop operational or strategic solutions to advancement of the project.

#### 3.1. Project Steering Group

This has representation at senior level from each of the consortium members. The Project Steering Group determines the overall strategic direction of the Project. They meet at least every two months during the academic terms.

#### 3.2. Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

This group provides advice to the Project Steering Group and support project staff in dealing with issues of a technical or legal nature. They are responsible for identifying, and where required, assisting with the evaluation of technical standards, tools and technologies which meet the Project requirements. Members of the Technical Advisory Group are expected to keep abreast with external developments in their field of expertise and where necessary attend relevant events, SIG meetings etc.

#### 3.3. Blended Learning Technologist Group

This is a support group for the BLTs to provide a mechanism for peer support to each other, identification of common issues/ solutions and sharing of best practice. The group is also used to provide support and guidance on areas of common interest. The group meets approximately every two months although they also communicate electronically.

#### 3.4. Operational Contacts Group

This consists of key staff within the partners who provide a linkage between project staff, institutional staff and Senior Management in order to support the project teams.

#### 3.5. Central Project Support Teams

The Project Management and Technical Development teams provide central support to the project and meet with other project groups as and when required.

## 4. Project Methodologies

### 4.1. Content Packaging

Processes and systems for development of Content Packages have been set-up and refined. Each package follows the processes within each of the stages below:

- Development
- Quality Assurance
  - Peer Reviewing
  - Technical and Production Edit
- User Testing
- Piloting

### 4.2. Delivery

- Approaches to preparing staff for delivery of BlendEd materials have been devised.



- Methodologies for capturing learner and teaching staff experience have been developed and implemented.
- An approach to harnessing cross college peer discussion on unit delivery is being considered.

## 5. Outputs

### BlendEd Website

The project website has been designed, published and used through out the project as a means of disseminating information, providing support and accessing workspaces. <http://www.blend-ed.ac.uk/>

### BlendEd Cook Book

This contains copies of the guidelines, standards and procedures developed by the BlendEd Consortium. It is designed to initially support staff engaged on project activities. It will be updated throughout the life of the project to reflect the experiences of the consortium in implementing the guidelines, standards and procedures. These continue to be developed and expanded throughout the project with additional sections being added and version control procedures in place as the project moves through its various stages. The Cookbook is available on the BlendEd website complete with version control documents.

### Metadata Generator

A user-friendly Metadata Generator for content packages has been created. It is accessible to BlendEd Learning Technologists through the BlendEd website.

### Document Management System and Workflow Repository

A digital repository utilising open source software has been implemented to manage documents and packages as well as workflow in the:

- Delivery of content packages to deadlines
- Manage the Quality Assurance workflow
- Disseminating content packages
- Piloting
- Capturing cross college evaluation data

### BlendEd Training Package

Aimed at teaching staff piloting and delivering the BlendEd resources through the blended learning approach



## 6. Project Scale

Efficient and effective project management techniques are crucial to the project's success. An outline of the project scale demonstrates that this is a great challenge but is being achieved.

Human resources to manage in the project are:

- Project Management Team ..... 2
- Technical Development Team..... 3
- BlendEd Learning Technologists (BLTs) ..... 7
- External Peer Reviewers ..... 27
- Curriculum Developers (CDs)..... 38
- **TOTAL Project Staff ..... 77**

Coupled with this is the requirement to manage the differing requirements of at least of 6 college timetables when scheduling pilot deliveries.

Material resources to manage in the project are

- SQA HN unit credits ..... 45
- Content Packages (approx.)..... 550
- Peer review Checklists (approx.) ..... 550
- Production Edit documents (approx.) ..... 550
- Pages\* (approx.)..... 11000

*\*Content packages contain on average 20 pages.*