

PARTNERSHIP FOR HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM – PHER

Five Principles of Blended Learning

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- 1. Learner Control:** Blended courses should provide learner control, especially for adult and college learners. Courses that give students more power over what they learn and how fast they learn are associated with greater student satisfaction and better student outcomes. This includes allowing students to repeat or take content out of order, skip content, retake tests, or choose project topics. Such structures are learner rather than teacher-focused.
- 2. Motivation:** Instructors of blended courses must be mindful of student motivation. Motivation is key to students' persistence and completion of courses. Motivation is significantly influenced by students' perceived relevance of the material and their belief in their ability to succeed. Faculty can boost this by emphasizing relevance, providing positive feedback, and offering clear, understandable course materials and instructions. Encouraging students to take control of their learning journey further strengthens their motivation, as they see a clear pathway to complete the course successfully.
- 3. Learner Reflection:** Blended courses must provide an opportunity for learner reflection. Any form of self-study, including the online component of a blended course, should include opportunities to reflect. Still, taking the idea further, learner reflection can include asking students to monitor their learning and explain their actions or ask themselves, "What have I learned from doing this activity?" or "How would I do this assignment differently next time?" A growth mindset asks us to accept and learn from our mistakes.
- 4. Social Presence:** Instructors of blended courses should promote social presence. Social presence, or the sense of connection and realness among students and instructors in a course, is critical for fostering a sense of belonging and community, especially in blended learning environments. Opportunities for interaction can lessen the drawbacks of limited physical gatherings. Higher social presence leads to greater student satisfaction. Faculty play a vital role in ensuring every student feels included, valued, and an essential part of the learning community, encouraging a safe space for engagement and support-seeking, even amidst uncertainty.
- 5. Collaboration:** Blended courses should include collaborative assignments. This can help to compensate for the reduced in person contact. Properly structured collaborative assignments have been shown to lead to better learning. Most LMSs include capabilities that allow students to connect via discussion boards, messaging, chat, blogging and live synchronous meetings. Collaborative work is active and student-driven. Typical collaborative assignments such as case studies, projects, and role plays give students exposure to multiple perspectives and focus on application to novel situations.

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